

House of Red and Blue

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House of Red and Blue

by [Vagabond_Anon](#)

Summary

The continuing misadventures of two Kiryuuins, the family company, and those dedicated enough to deal with their antics.

Bobbin weave

Chapter Summary

Beep “One, three, and seven take bravo.”

Beep “Two, four, five, six we double back and fist alpha for toys.”

Beep “Any questions fuckers?”

Beep “No we will not C4 the candy van *yet*.”

BEEP!! “GOGOGOGO!!!”

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“We have rain inbound from echo five, no visual. Requesting counter battery from aerial.”

“I don't care if that leaves us without birds for twenty, just pop the Russians before we're splashed. When the armor rolls we'll just drop out and use pipes.”

“I know that's risky, we've managed it before.”

“Get us rolling two. Pray the MBTs are sleeping still.”

“And shut the fuck up six, YOU'RE THE FI-*FUCKING* DAMN ENGINEER! Just keep this bathtub rolling while we shoot the guns.”

There she is.

Eventful winter had given way to a peaceful spring. Repairs to the small number of damages to their not so small abode had been completed, laughs had been shared, and Ryuko had to make a very interesting trip to the local police station after a fisherman found one of her boots in the local pond. Poor guy wouldn't let the matter rest until the owner was either found or showed up to claim them. She decided to remove the name tags from the rest of her shoes after that.

... “*Could a been worse Sats, don't think they bought my story that well though. How did the fuzz find me by name alone anyways? Blueberry's gettin rusty.*”...

It was a gray cloudy day filled with the occasional drizzle. Back to the regular grind of chores Satsuki had been sweeping since five in the morning, *dust was a damnable enemy*. No longer hearing the scrape of trowels and profanity among the rain outside, she went searching for her *responsibility*. The apparent *squad commander* had finished her job of clearing the gutters from last years wet leaves and disappeared before she could be given her next task. Evidently she sneaked her way back inside, stripped out of the still dripping garments now laying on a chair, and set up in front of the house's largest screen to *Crush the Noobs* in whatever shooter this one was.

Honestly she should be berating Ryuko for *dereliction of duty*. Screaming at Imouto to get her bare rear end off the couch. But she didn't. She was astoundingly content just staring at the woman sitting before her command some form of military engagement in nothing more than a shirt. Surprisingly, *doing well*.

Or rather unsurprisingly? No matter what she claims, when she puts her mind to it... I suppose competence was to be expected. Blood is blood after all... Thank the heavens she took more after father...

“Confirmed visual from sat-map, Bravo is clear. proceed north road to dust charlie before doubling back to regroup.”

“Who joined? *OH!* Welcome to the party Wolf battalion! You're clear to roll down delta line. Depots all yours. Have fun with the house party, recon told us to expect cake and streamers. Be advised no birds for fifteen.”

“We're gonna flatten the airstrip. Copy. Good luck Wolf-two.”

“You done preppin the fuckin football yet? Good, load the trunk and step on it. Five, man the 105.”

“Yes that was intentional, stop bitching and deal with it.”

The small grouping of, *she assumed players*, entered a vehicle that started off down a raised roadway. Intermittent gun fire off in the distance getting louder as they went on. Radio silence broken to deliver progress updates to some unknown dispatch.

“Over-watch how are we doing locally- Tanks? *TANK!* PULL INTO THE DITCH! NO THE *OTHER* DITCH DIPS HIT!”

“Did they see- YUP! GET THE FUCK OUT, grab the package and bail!”

“Breakaway we need heat from the outcropping to our west or this turns into a broken arrow!”

“No dice? ...Then backup Wolf. We can still do this.”

“Seven I'm going party van. load all the sticky we got in my rear before they decide to grow a pair and charge!”

“SHUT THE FUCK UP AND MOVE YOU MANCHILDREN!”

Things were turning grim. Some form of T-72 had pinned the one APC convoy behind a dirt berm of a road. *Modern main battle tanks are fast, reinforcements would not likely make it in time. Nor would they have the armaments to get passed a modern tanks reactive armor package. So what is she going to do?* Some sort of bomb is needed at some form of destination. Shells making dirt rain around them. *Surely just send two over the top as a sacrificial distraction while they drive further up the road to the objective?... What in blazes IS she doing!?*

“Six your pop can still loaded? Power the PA system and a smoke for me from over there. The rest of you get going and finish the job.”

A sharp left turn after cresting the ridge. Paint scratched by inbound heavy ordnance screaming by.

“*HAHAHA!* YOU MISSED AGAIN ASSHAT! GO BACK TO CASUAL MATCHES! *CAN'T TOUCH THIS~~!*”

Vehicle bounced like crazy over rough terrain as it turned left and right, almost tipping over several times. Surround speakers came to life with more than just the gunfire and explosions after several shots.

“STAY FUCKING STILL BITCH SO I CAN SHOOT MY LOAD DOWN YOUR SOON TO BE NEW FACE HOLE!”

“Not even in your dreams pal~!”

Judging by the lack of successful return hits from the obnoxious sounding tank commander this might not be the first time Ryuko's done this. Telling the whole squad to back off only to single-handedly take on the enemy. Then using downright sultry distraction techniques on the opponents. I suppose it fits her current fighting style.

“Three, two, one.. BAILED OUT! HIT THE PLUNGER GUYS!”

Her character stepped out of the drivers hatch and jumped off before the eight wheeled vehicle slammed full-speed into the side of the enemy armor. Promptly exploding with enough force to flip the offending tank over. Some moments later a large mushroom cloud lit up on the horizon from her position, met with very excited laughter.

“YES! YES! YESSS! Grab some soft skins and round everyone back up. We'll get to supply before striking south. Let's see the bastards defend castle without air support this time.”

Her mission evidently was successful. *Time to crash the party.* Walking up to the couch she leaned over so that both Ryuko and the microphone would hear her.

“My dear would you be so kind as to hand me the remote, I need to turn down the volume so I can hear you better.”

“SHI- SA-! Hi... uh, sure?”

She put her controller down warily, got up, and took two steps forward to reach the coffee table. Bending over to quickly grab the smaller of two remotes near her. Very eager to get back to her seat. Satsuki had silently followed suit, already beginning to grin, to prevent that.

“Permission to touch you my dear.”

A hurried *“Always- Shut up nerds!”*

“I sincerely apologize in advance.”

“...eh?”

She proceeded to wince after somewhat forcefully belting a hand onto an exposed rear cheek. The action taken with enough surprise to force the younger forward. She dropped the black square to grab the table for support. *A tad too much, but it will get my point across.* Sharp and quick half yelp, half moan, had escaped her mouth in the process. Followed by an explosion of noise from her headphones. Moving forward further Satsuki placed her head onto Ryuko's shoulder from behind, close enough for both parties.

“I again apologize for being *physical*. But what did I tell you about sitting on the couch *with naked nethers my nefarious nymph~?*”

Red lights burned into life from all over her head, matching the shade of her face.
“...Don't?”

A throaty hum in confirmation. “*And what were you doing my priceless precious waifu~?*”
“...That...”

Another explosion of cheers, cat calls, and “*OH SHITS!*” from the silicone audience. *That would probably be enough punishment.* She reached over and pulled the headset off glowing cheeks and spoke into the mouthpiece directly.

“My dear has to unfortunately leave you for now oh noble soldiers of unknown lands, *I currently need her myself~.*”

More yells cut off as Satsuki walked away from the leaning over form and shut off the lit up box under their screen. Still gripping the short table's side Ryuko dropped to her knees, red glow overpowering the various lamps.

“There goes eight months of reputation buildin...”

“Do your digital peers not know your *spoken for?*”

“...Sats my chat was tied into field com... *At least* a h-hundred people heard that... *Fiber knows h-how many more tuned in after yer first line.*”

“Perhaps. There are more pressing issues. *Firstly* we still have to get to work by seven.”

She walked back towards the hunched over woman. Reaching her, she lowered to her own knees and gently pressed herself onto Ryuko's tee-shirt clad back. Wrapping one hand around front to apologetically hug her, and one down below to get a feel for the effectiveness of her teasing. Eliciting another moan after dragging two fingers across now damp lips before suddenly standing up again. Examining her now sticky left index and middle fingers while pleading blue eyes turned around to look up at her.

Mental note, responds extremely well to auditory stimulation. Explore later.

Maintaining eye contact she sucked both digits clean, releasing them with a small pop from her mouth. Another burst of shuddering red light in response.

“*Second*, as I have informed you numerous times this *admittedly wonderful substance* shall not make contact with our nice leather seating arrangements. *You are pleasantly positively acidic~.* So go put on some clothes because, *third*, you still have chores to complete before we go.”

A groan as her face fell into a frown.

“*Nee-saaaan* you can't just do *THAT* and tell me to go back to-”

“I would wish nothing more than to oblige you *right now* Imouto, but we have a great many things to do and little time to do them. So please start moving. You're the one that volunteered to handle both sets of laundry nowadays, *and I quote, To deliver my fuckin people to their herald all sudsy and chrome.*”

“.....*W-Well they kinda are.*”

Mouth pursed to one side, unbelieving eyebrow raised. “Don't think I didn't notice you're siphoning of the laundry supplies for your toiletries Imouto.”

“...*W-W-WAIT, W-What... Naw, me? N-Never!...*”

Another pointed look with raised brow.

“...*H-How?*”

“*You started smelling of fresh towels every day my dear~.* Not that I disapprove of the change, *I am the one that introduced you to the concept after all...* Please just buy some extra for the bath basket instead so we don't run out in the middle of the week, *again.*”

“I can do that...”

“Then hop to it Imouto. Breakfast in an hour.”

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“Ryuko.”

“It's fuckin great right!?”

“*Ryuko.*”

“What?”

“When you told me you intended to buy a new form of motorized transportation I had assumed you meant something *sensible?* Something more utilitarian than your two wheeled vibrating steed.”

...*"So why do we always use corporate cars? You don't wanna drive? Fuck I'll get one so we can do what we want an not wait when I can't bike. Not like the garage is full."*...

Rain was still pouring as she stared incredulously from the front door at Ryuko, sitting in the driver's seat of today's ruby red ride to work. Replies half yelled out the vertically open passenger door to be heard over the weather.

“It has four wheels! And seat-belts! An just enough seats fer two.”

“...What is it?”

“An eighty-nine Mazda five-fifty sport. Was rustin away in this wrecker yard I found a while back. The big guy made some calls an told me original parts for the non-production version are pretty much nonexistent so I bought it and had it modernized. You like older stuff an it's an old-*ish*, rare, prototype! Come on Sats it's adorable. *Pop up headlights!*”

Flipped switch on the dash demonstrating the stated feature was indeed functional.

“Imouto.”

“Yeah?”

“What are we wearing?”

“The usual? Well, I borrowed one of yer shirts today but you said I-”

“Yes, yes. Now what kind of doors does this *wonderful chariot* posses?”

“...Gull wing?”

“And how do you suppose we enter or exit such a low vehicle, in skirts, *with vertically opening doors?*”

“That's eas-... *oh.*” Cheeks burned at realizing her point “With the... and the door wells... *Carefully?*”

“*Thirty minutes.* We don't have the time for this. *Two legs at a time my dear, two legs at a time.*”

Crossing into the rain she finally sat in the open passenger seat. Preparing for anything as she pulled the door down behind her in the meter tall *miniaturized sports car*. Ryuko almost hopping for joy, grinning madly.

“*Thirty minutes huh?*”

“... Yes?”

“I say we can make it in *twenty!*”

“Ryuko? *RYUKO!?!?*”

Her left arm was already working the gear shifter. Small tires squealing in protest for the first time in their new life of punishment. Driver blissfully ignoring the continuously more frantic requests to stop as the couple catapulted past the front gate and into their morning commute.

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The buildings parking garage had been mostly empty when they arrived exactly ten minutes early for once. Giving them a rare empty elevator to ride up together.

“I told ya we'd make it Sats.”

“...And I told you seven times *not to take turns at highway speeds.*”

“Don't tell me the *great eyebrows* was *afraid~?*”

“...No matter how well you might handle mechanical beasts my dear, I *fear* not everyone else on the road is as capable. I would rather not experience the sound and sensations accompanied by either of us being subjected to crash conditions. So... *yes*. I feared what you could be subjected to due in part to *minimal* fault of your own. Potentially.”

“... *Speed limits, energy and acceleration, yadda yadda... I get ya. Fine...*”

A relieved sigh from her soon to be regular passenger. Ding signaling the arrival at Ryuko's floor she started forward, attempting to wave. Instead her hand was gently grabbed, body pulled back into the box, and dipped backwards for a french kiss. Four seconds later she was pulled back up and twirled forward out the door. Turning around again while dazed all she got was a smile and a “*thank you*”. Metal doors closing once again not a moment later. Standing there while blinking to catch up to what just happened.

“Now why the fuck can't we do *THAT* every morning?”

Chapter End Notes

Still not too terribly sure of the quality level, if I'm doing something wrong please don't hesitate to call me out on it.

Here's hoping I won't disappointment anyone.

Don't mind the view

Chapter Summary

“Yes, the building must be encased in one way privacy glass.”

“Floor to ceiling as the submitted plans specify.”

“Yes, that includes sound proof panes. Estimate?”

“Thank you, we look forward to working with you.”

Chapter Notes

Things get explicitly detailed. Wasn't completely terrible so it got to stay this time, for better or for worse. If that's not your thing the start is noticeable and the short contents can probably be skipped.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Briefcase in hand, Satsuki was waiting once again by the front door for her counterpart to turn up so they wouldn't be late to work. Requested presence in question hopping toward her on one leg, *in not-so-insignificant heels no less*, while fumbling with a shoe on the other raised foot behind her.

“Are you finally ready to drive the miniature death trap my dear?”

“It's a legit car with a roof an shit, not a bomb. *And I know you've snuck out to finger the paint Nee-san~.*” Catching stubborn latch finally she returned to a normal stride and straightened out the straps beneath her shirt. “Yeah, totally ready.”

A critical gaze was used to inspect her frame up and down. Borrowed *and thus unusually dignified ensemble* was mostly in order today. Faint green was marginally visible behind a strained snow white long sleeve dress shirt. Rather modest pencil skirt's material was too dense to discern it's contents, *but her gait was off by millimeters.* “Hold it Imouto.”

“eh?”

“*Skirt check.* You know the drill.”

Reaching the door she slumped her shoulders and expression downward at the mention of their now regular morning ritual.

"...Fuckin reeeally Eyebrows? *Every fiber damn day this week?* If ya wanna spice up the mornin routine so bad I'll just wear a belt-skirt fer ya to examine~."

"No, this is strictly procedure to insure my rose is decently *bundled in her bouquet for the day. Your brand of teasing is far too mesmerizing and time consuming for morning trysts~.* Lift it up."

"I'm not two. *I can dress myself properly...*" Cheeks matching her industry given nickname as she crossed her arms over stomach to gather both sides. Pulling upwards to invert the black material around her hips.

"Considering I need to do this to prevent you *accidentally forgetting* every other morning I'm not so sure... *Hmmm, Black and green? Finally reaching into the rest of the color spectrum are we~?*"

"...A-Anything but pink."

"Majority of construction is more akin to a fine fishing net than unmentionables, but I suppose I should be thankful it's something at- *Well this is new for your collection. My what a cute little bow? Curiously positioned rather low. Directions to your favorite on button, no~? What ever happened to no Extra unneeded decorative shit?*"

"...I w-was told you really liked the limited sale sets of *super stupidly unpractical* stuff we put out fer February... And we d-didn't really do... There's another one on the back... Kinda sheer patterned bra. There are some gloves that match-

"If you're going all out for my *poor taste in lingerie*, I don't suppose I could convince you to don them for the day?"

"So *I didn't miss-place em I do have them internally*, wouldn't it be weird as shit to wear lace gloves to work?"

"Your position is rather weird Imouto. *If anyone actually bothers to complain, tell them to take it up with me~.* Enough wasting time, *Please retrieve thy chariot madame~.*" Deep bow added for emphasis.

Personal morals patrol giving her a green light to proceed for the day, black material was pushed back down and smoothed flat. Brushing past the doorway she went outside and clacked down the stone U shaped driveway toward the garage. A smaller building located near the front gate, already sliding keys out from their home in her forearm under white cuff. Green lace rapidly covering visible hands as she went.

"*Gait is now inline with normal, albeit slightly damp, parameters.*

Unfortunate to leave alone for extended periods of time, but acceptable enough. Here's hoping to a smooth day, Imouto."

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"My office has three chairs. Two of those unoccupied. The third even has an inviting lap if you're *THAT* against using them! And yet..."

"And~?"

"And yet you continue to lounge across my desk. Your disregard for the appointed seating furniture is disturbing my work space organization unnecessarily. *Would you be so kind as to rectify the situation for me, dear? Should I find you a vase instead~?"*

REVOCS central had been deemed a terrible waste of space, better to rent out the surrounding blocks instead of using them for Life fiber storage and experimentation. A now common meeting in a specific top floor office of the rebuilt business tower was well under way. Every day at one on the dot as teams broke for lunch the Red label chief would find her way up past the finance desks, past the Conglomerate holding offices, and reach the CEO's domain. The only person who dared enter the room without so much as knocking.

The first few times she had attempted the trip had been amusing. Security knew of her importance from communications during *The great fiber war*, and her ability to beat the ever living shit out of all of them combined. Allowing her up without question. The various attendants and office drones had not. Utilizing everything she could time and time again she would sneak her way past them. Then walk casually back out and past faces displaying fear at letting someone in unannounced on the way to her own department. Satsuki had put an end to this after noticing the nervousness sweep through every afternoon.

Months down the line when the secretaries finally worked up the nerve to ask why this unplanned but extremely regular executive meeting was never on the schedule both shared a silent conversation of quirked brows and a shrug.

...Bound to get out eventually...

...Couldn't hurt, right?...

Awkwardly smiling both held up their left hands as the answer. The office rumor mill had been guessing at the connection since day one, but exploded after that. So Ryuko had to find new ways of amusing herself while avoiding them for her own sanity. Such as twirling a certain brass nameplate after wolfing down whatever the days food was.

"The only ceramic container I'm getting into is the tub at home. And yer not workin right now~. So chill Eyebrows, nothin better to do durin their break. Mostly..."

"There are plenty of things you could be *doing*, my dear. At least some of them productive. Almost all of them not involving my desk being used as a couch."

Remnants of their takeout moved to the nearby trash Ryuko took the opportunity to slide over and sit up in the cleared spot. Leaning forward to plant both green hands between her thighs for balance. Disregarding the pen or two that got knocked off in the process.

"Doing you say~?"

"I've told you many times Imouto we are not *doing* anything of the sort at wor~"

Leaning back in her chair she stopped after hearing something drop and opened her eyes. Both faces going pink to varying degrees with Ryuko's legs now opened, pushing the borrowed knee length black skirt up to reveal green garters in the process. Legs slowly swaying back and forth into the space beneath the wood surface. Realizing that the now unobstructed *display* was spread for the wall of glass immediately behind her, she rolled her chair forward. Jacketed elbow coming to rest on each silk covered knee, hands under her chin, looking up disapprovingly at the *rebel* leaning back and laughing.

"Must you? I suppose I should have questioned your choice in appealingly designed underwear more seriously."

"This is the tallest buildin in that direction for a *looooong* ass distance Nee-san! And it's a square mirror from outside. No *pryin* eyes to *intrude*. But you know, while yer there... *help a girl out~?*"

"I know for a *fact* you were wearing something rather narrow in a vibrant green color as we left. *When did you...?*"

"Relax, I'm still *Behaving* Eyebrows. Ain't nobody else see'n jack shit in the office er otherwise. As you wanted, *only mine wife gets that privilege~.*"

"And yet already breaking another rule by threatening to soil my nice desk pad."

"You're the one that always wants *practice*, er somethin... I'm just obligin my pretty lady."

"My *wayward* wife do you have *any* idea how bad it would be for us

to do such a thing right now?" Right hand betraying her words, going forward to lightly finger the strap on her left thigh. *"How unprofessional it would be if found out? The tabloids are already pontificating profusely on our perceived perversion. Imagining the unsightly immoral depravity that could be going on between us after you showed up to the runway launch on my arm in that layered-lace slip of a dress you concocted."*

"And it served it's intended purposes. Especially in gettin into yer suit pants the second we got home~! It's not like you give a shit what any old rags says anyway."

Soft hum in response. "I don't, unfortunately the investors did. While significantly earlier than planned, *seemingly as usual when plans involve you*, we are pretty much back to a point we can re-privatize this particular enterprise. I give it a quarter or two thanks to the lack of profits. Sell some properties, buy-back the stock, and some excessive paperwork. Simple enough to do. Being... *non conformists* in the traditional business world has it's ups and downs. And some death threats, but Inumuta can handle those."

"Blah, Blah, spreadsheets, Blah. We got a little over thirty minutes still Nee-san, and it's not like anyone else would barge in unannounced. Pleeese? I've been good! Didn't even threaten to kill anyone fer stupidity this week..."

Attempting to sigh in such close proximity to exposed pelvic region merely brought in a lungful of aroma. Breath exhaled slowly, tickling goosebumps to life around sensitive pink flesh.

"A-And I spent the l-last few days makin these nice wrappin's fer ya..."

So how does she figure this will work out... No cameras in particular offices including mine, no threat of audience, and she can most assuredly get off quickly when handled properly... How is there always a blasted functioning plan behind her moves.

The former queen would have killed anyone attempting such a thing some years ago. And yet now... Now she found it difficult not to enjoy the slight adrenaline rush currently hitting her among all the other stimuli.

Maybe we will be found, maybe not. "To do, or not to do, that is the question." A significant break from the tedium to be sure.

Response to the rhetorical question even more so.

"Ehm..."

"Hmm?"

Fingers fidgeted with the black hemline near her waist. *"Um... T-*

Theirs not to make reply, Theirs not to reason why, Theirs but to do and die?"

Eyes shot up in surprise, mentally rechecking that she heard that right. "You actually read *Tennyson*!?"

"W-Whats the shock for!? *I told you I could read!...*"

Head shaken in disbelief. *She REALLY wants it today... And she'll do it one way or another as I slowly break down over the day. Greater risks taken as it goes on...* "The things I do for love... Imouto, some rules. Soundproofing or not, you're going to be very Very quiet. If one *drop* is on this mat afterward, you're cleaning it. I don't care how, but it would have to be *fast*. And no fibrous extras of any kind, period. *Am I understood?*"

Red bang bounced up and down enthusiastically in response, not willing to let even a syllable stop the procession.

Cross one more item off the ever shrinking list of what I would never do.

With a left hand splayed she gently pushed forward on Ryuko's stomach. Signal received to provide a better angle, she slid her rear forward and leaned back to grab the other edge of the desk behind her. Both of her three inch stilettos pulled off and set underneath the chair so as to not dirty Nee-san's jacket.

Preparations complete she moved down and forward, thighs resting on each shoulder, and began by catching the early conspirators that had rolled down on either side. One even reaching far enough to darken a patch along the top band of a thigh-high. Each moment of contact stimulating the sub-dermal fiber network to relax it's innate protective guard, effectively softening her skin to it's normally hidden unnatural perfection. Each tongue swipe momentarily connecting both individual's nerves, shooting fire down Satsuki's own spine.

They were their enemy, the great evil. Reduced to a conduit of her feelings. A phenomenon that never quite made it to Iori's research notes.

Legs kissed clean, her counterpart was starting to breath deeply. Jaw clenched with unbelievable force. *Time to test that resolve.* A single slow, long, stroke was taken from bottom to top. Mapping the dilated field to plan today's attack pattern. Again working from the bottom, many short careful motions made to ensure every square millimeter received it's due attention. Short pauses in between to suck up the nectar attempting escape.

A cursory glance upwards to inspect the situation. Gaze lingering momentarily on the bottom of forest green mounds freed from the top few buttons of her dress shirt. Peaks already pushing against the exceptionally thin fabric. Head had been thrown back, but the telltale red glow was still illuminating along her jaw. A

carefully placed nip with teeth got her attention, suppression efforts properly redoubled with a faint whine. With an apologetic kiss on the same spot, she continued.

More attention was now shifted up *field*. Swipes downward occasionally dipping short distances along the roof inside. Nose constantly clipping bud while tongue ignored it, a small bucking each time. The faintest of groans accompanying them, just barely audible over the buildings central air circulating.

Doing well so far Imouto, but now comes your weakness.

Another pause to let the younger's mind wonder *what now? Hairs not-!!!* Mouth pressed to form a seal around it. Immediately applying as much suction as she could muster. Tongue Constantly moving across and swirling around the most sensitive of her target-able nerve clusters. Wood top creaked until she gathered enough wits to remember to *not* destroy the surface. More dips to the low field, more liquid threatening to roll out and down. Breathing was picking up above as the electrical pleasure shockwaves intensified. Much more of this and her own core might betray her. Breasts already protesting their continued constraint.

A preemptive s-strike properly into the depths is necessary.

Focus became split. Clit continued to be orally rough housed, with trips dragged down to swirl along the sides as deep as she could reach. Random paths taken between. Both legs had moved to fully encircle the seated woman, pressing forward in short spasms. *Any moment now...* Speed was increased, both hands now employed to rub along the opaque black silk surrounding her.

A shaking hand released the table edge and came forward to rest on her head, like many times before, never pushing downward of pulling in. A simple gesture seeking permission. Lace touch also spread more of the burn to her scalp.

"Give it to me Imouto. Let your fire burn over~."

Body before her went into overdrive as every muscle rolled. Mouth clamping down upon her soft lips again, this time to catch the assaulting tart deluge of near silent ecstasy. Reward for her efforts going down with an invited staccato of mind searing pleasure. Musculature around her fighting itself, ever mindful of not crushing the head between. Red face above thrown as far back as she could bend, small groan of satisfaction breaking free of the extended throat... as the office door was slammed open.

Success! Got indents saving in HTML this time.

If this formatting is a problem I can try reworking things into proper ".docs" of some sort instead of .txt files I usually edit.

Package deal

Chapter Summary

“Sir? You two can't just walk in! Do you have an appointment? SIR!”

“There are two things you need to know.

“But Sir-”

“One, I don't need an appointment. Two, the reason why is above your pay grade.”

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Two figures entered the large, but mostly empty, office. The first a tall, distinctly mohawked not-so-gentleman, carrying a black rectangular metal hardcase. The second, a shorter woman with dark skin and white hair that paused in the doorway, quickly reading the situation. Falling back on years of experience her priority shifted to ensure said door was closed quickly enough to prevent more unwanted intrusions. Attendant still yelling for them from her desk outside.

“-You two can't JUST!-”

“Miss please calm down. Our meeting is top priority, and will not be disturbed unless the buildings coming down. Or your position will be terminated. We won't be long.”

Blue eyes shot open at the noise, tears falling *upward* after locking onto the upside down and frowning tanned face standing a few feet from the desk. Impatiently waiting.

No... NO-NO-NO-NO-NOOOO!

The stream of her fluids experienced a rough *second wind* before being finished. Finally regarding the noise Satsuki shrugged raised legs aside and went to pull the frozen woman off her desk and forward into her lap. An effort to salvage the situation, unfortunately Ryuko had a different idea involving the same direction of motion. Combined force moving the chair back before she started falling butt first. Sliding clear off the end, back of her head still unprotected, smashed into the wood surface on the way down. Body landing behind the desk with another loud thump. Her vision blasted into stars for a bit.

Ever proper, even while cheeks were still wet with *Imouto's* love, Satsuki smoothly pulled a handkerchief from the jackets outer breast pocket to politely wipe her lips dry. Eyes a smoldering fury directed toward the duo. Taking a glance down at the injured woman who was trying, *and failing*, to not cry while rubbing the back of her head. Orgasmic aftershocks somehow still rolling through her to create a rather volatile looking state. Reaching down she offered the white fabric square to the still trembling form. Unsure of how to proceed with the new phenomenon.

"Here, please dry yourself with this."

Chocked half sobs flipping wildly with angry yells in return. A distinctly painful emotional cacophony going from blame to apologies.

"Nee-san... NEE-SAN! I'M... I'm sorry-I'm sorry-I'm sorry... I DIDN'T- I didn't know... WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME! FUCKING HELL!... FUCK!... I'm sorry...."

Completely bewildered at the extremely unusual mood swings, and crushing hug on her leg. She could do nothing more than ruffle rapidly upturning hair and quietly shush her.

"Just breath for me. I usually pride myself in being able to anticipate your... thought patterns... Currently you have me at a disadvantage my dear."

A small paper box bounced off the glowing head and landed next to her on the carpeted floor. Lighter following soon after. *Ice queen* returning to form upon recognizing the items. Switching her attention to the two people standing behind the open chairs, eye twitching displeasure was directed full force at them. Furniture rattled as she boomed.

"FOR WHAT PURPOSE!?!"

A flat gruff tone from the man to the left in response to her outburst. *"She's being flooded by who knows what kinda hormones and Fiber junk right now. Frankly the last time she broke down she almost murdered all of us. That will help bring her down. You both need to be stable for this."*

Noticing smoke rising around the wood lip, and the lack of clinging mass to her leg, she glanced back under the desk. Disheveled mess leaning to the side of the wood enclosure staring at a burning stick blankly. A sigh of resignation before opening the bottom drawer to her right, greatly disused glass ashtray pulled out from the back and offered to her catatonic partner.

"Please try not to get any on the carpet."

Short nod of recognition received, it was time for some answers.

Both elbows were returned to the desk, glance going back and forth.

"You may *sit*."

Tsumugu's box was deposited on the table as they took their seats. Great number of locks solidly in place around it.

"Before anything. I take it today's events will not be a *problem*, Hoomaru?"

"Milady, I had heard rumors from central of your betrothal to *someone*. While... at a loss for how such a... *relationship* developed, due to our circumstances it will *never* be in my position to question your personal life and it's... *developments*. I humbly apologize for our untimely intrusion into your personal sphere. *WE*, should have knocked."

"*Bite me snow-white you know this is important.*"

"Mister Kinagase?"

"Everything considered I can't say it's a *surprise* you're keeping it in the family Kiryuin. But--"

"OI!" A bump and flash of red anger illuminating half the room from underneath the table before a stilling hand pressed her to sit back down. Both newcomers sharing a questioning look that Satsuki waved off.

"*Shhhh... But?*"

"I signed on with Beach to stop aliens from killing everyone. I signed up with your people to continue doing the same after *this one* showed us more of them than we thought survived. So long as Matoi is not going *Rainbow version two*, people aren't dying to fabric monsters, and you're still doing your job ensuring that status-quo continues I don't give *two shits* who you're *copulating with*. So, no, *This* will not be a problem, Ma'am. *Just keep the Kiryuin brand of affections to yourselves from now on.*"

"Your honesty is noted and appreciated as usual, Mister Kinagase. However be aware that while I care little for my public perception, if you act in any way to jeopardize this company or more importantly *my Wife*... I would consider both to be an attack on *her future stability and security*. For which I will personally kill you. *Slowly*. Terms and conditions clear?"

"*Crystal*. Can we get on to business already?"

"*But of course*. I take it search and destroy objective has been completed Hoomaru?"

"All known and suspected stockpile sites for Life Fibers have been cleared with a fine tooth comb Milady. Fiber sewing equipment torched worldwide. Everything otherwise was gone as expected, except *this*."

"This box's contents was recovered from an abandoned warehouse we found in Greenland thanks to some fishermen rumors. I voted we drop thermo-nukes down the elevator shaft as soon as the sensors picked up minor activity four kilometers below ground. *Quicksilver* here voted for us to go down and find out how much we were dealing with. So we posted security and went into the coldest hell-hole I've ever heard of."

"*I told you my name is Rei.*"

"*And I told you I don't give a shit.*"

"*ahem*" A foot nudged the one still seated on the square of white under the desk. Contentedly watching swirls contrast with the first rays of afternoon sun flooding in from outside. Hair refusing to calm down after Nee-san's speech. "Ryuko?"

"*N-Neh!?!... oh. G-Get the fuck on with it.*"

"*Thank you.*"

"...Y-Yes Lady Ryuko. The sample is a ball three centimeters in diameter that was stored in a clean room environment. We were unable to determine when the place was installed. It was however a stabilized mass of Fibers that needed dealing with. Being the only such sample found it was decided to immediately bring it back here for the lab."

"Logical, but that might not be necessary."

"Milady?"

"Current sample stock is *sufficiently dangerous* to have on hand as it is. We will be fine for some years to come with proper management. Destruction will be priority at this time."

"Which is where *Little Red Fiber hood* comes in."

"...*Indeed* Kinagase. Ryuko are you currently paying attention?"

A grunt in response.

"Investigate."

String of grumbles bouncing the fire in front of her face as she extracted herself from the small space. Two heads turning around to give the woman some privacy as she pulled a pair of green panties out of her bra to uncomfortably slip up her legs.

"Mohawk... I burned through half the pack. I'm keeping this... *P-Pervert d-didn't have to s-stare!...*"

"Imouto calm down--"

"I AM CALM!"

"Whatever floats your boat *Mistress Matoi-Kiryuin*, you're welcome by the way."

Another stick of fire lit up to replace the last one that had been violently put out. Eyes finding great interest in the view outside.

"C-Can we get back the shit at hand? Open the fucker... *Fucker.*"

"Permission to proceed granted."

"No offense Milady, but *here?*"

Satsuki reached over to pinch Ryuko in the leg, causing a slight jump and pout.

"*This one* is more than capable of both directly interacting with and neutralizing the contents within. We will be fine."

Tsumugu leaned forward and undid the multitude of locks surrounding the container. Backing away while opening it. Red glow spilled out to fill the room, emitted by the small sphere centrally located within. Some unseen force accompanied the light from within setting Ryuko off. Fiber lines bursting out of her clothes ready to spear and converge on the target, scissor blades pulled off their spot on her chest and poised to demolish the ball of yarn.

"BY ALL THAT'S *FUCKED* SHUT. UP!!"

"What is it actually doing Imouto?"

"It's waking up in pain and- *SCREAMING LIKE THE DAMNED!* Ball of fuckin Banshi from the original alright... *GRRRR*, SILENCE!!! BEFORE I MAKE YOU MY NEXT PUSSYFLOSS! ...*Fuckin finally.*"

Nervousness around the table from her one sided argument. Newcomers visually investigating Ryuko more than the Life fiber ball. Satsuki breaking the spell with a cough.

"Definitely can't let Banshi live. Do it."

Stabs and skewers assaulted the round ball turning it into a fine red mist. Alien fiber corpse remnants devoured by her own threads. Execution complete weapons were replaced on their string, red

spears returned to their flesh home behind now tattered cloth.

"Ruined another outfit... *Wait- Fuck, these were yours...*"

"I have plenty of others Imouto, you are developing an unfortunate habit of ruining my clothes. How do you otherwise feel?"

Hands were flexed, spine cracked, and a wave of red reinforcement temporarily rolled down still porcelain skin. "Pretty much the same." Glare thrown at Mohawk, who put both hands up in surrender. *"Head still hurts like a bitch though."*

"Enough on that. What's done is done, and this moment should be celebrated."

Earning more than one confused look she explained.

"This marks the end of an era as far as we are aware. Humanity is now free. Invader from yonder stars, thus officially ends thy strangled reign of blood and terror. Ashes to ashes, dust to dust, may thy unholy amalgamation of false life find no rest amongst whatever pit of darkness from whence thee came and banished hence."

Tsumugu got up and retrieved the box, resigning the fate of his lighter as a peace offering. "And that is *sorta* why I said bring it here *Raymond*. Back to the grind. I'm heading downstairs if you need me, heard professor glowstick nipples was stirring trouble. I'll get him back into a lab coat."

"That would be appreciated. And you Hoomaru?"

Being addressed she stood up before bowing low at the waist.

"I will return to my post in managing and selling off unnecessary oversees Conglomerate properties Milady. Lady Ryuko. Once again I give you both my *deepest* apology for the extreme breach of your private life and promise it will not happen again. May your marriage be long and prosperous."

Ryuko took the stick from her mouth and waved it around to point at the two individuals. "There any particular reasons you two chuckle fucks are bein all passive aggressive an shit?"

Mohawk already gone, Hoomaru maintained her bow while answering. "Field agent Tsumugu Kinagase has a great many feelings of ill-will harbored against my person. While *understandable*, his choice to refuse using my name is petulantly grating. I apologize again la- *Mistress* Ryuko? Do you have an honorific preference I should add for records?"

"....I don't give a fuck, but why can't it just be--"

"It will be noted. You need not worry at all about such small squabbles among the ranks in the future."

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.
.

Heavy wood door was closed, *and locked*. Leaving the office with just two occupants in the rare moment of awkward silence. Elder poking at the last embers dropped into the ash tray now on her desk. Younger leaning against the front edge after tossing both wrecked outer garments aside, finishing the last stick from the paper box.

"S-SO!... Why the fuck does everyone you work with use honorifics and shit?"

"It's a form of respect Imouto. You are technically their boss, a war veteran, and deserving of such respect from all those before you. Believe me, *they won't stop no matter what you say.*"

"*Super secretary* wasn't even listening... *I know that puberty trucked my ass, but come on fuckin Mistress!?* I don't look like I run or work in a brothel... *Do I?*"

"Going on assumptions your *magnificent cleavage* is rather conspicuous right now. Otherwise I am unfamiliar with such *establishments* dear. *Do I want to know why you are?*"

"...*Eh...* I uh- I've been kicked out of more than one for tryin to *uh, p-purchase... e-entertainment while underage. I was legal! But whatever...* Easier than tryin to- I- I was a little horny shit with too much pocket change sometimes okay!"

"Self deprecation is unbecoming of you, *that's my job~.*"

"..."

"You are supremely lazy."

"You told me I make my own hours an never been late on anythin."

"Indeed posses quite possibly the most *ferocious sexual appetite imaginable.*"

"I e-enjoy the finer things in life... *sometimes*. An yer... *rather fine...* *It's not my fault the little red shits fuckin SING when I get off.*"

"And prone to abusing *substances.*"

Taking the orange filter out of her mouth she stubbed the last embers out into the glass tray. "Not a fan of these Sats. *Bikini*

warrior's honor. You done shittin on me?"

"I was merely attempting to ensure your feet stay grounded Imouto~."

"You'd have to shackle me to the floor fer that Eyebrows. I've got the jumping long distances without smashing the ground bit down. Kinda wanted to keep it as a surprise when--"

Satsuki sighed before folding her arms on the desk and putting her forehead down "Would this possibly have anything to do with your recent penchant of *throwing yourself off the roof* every now and again instead of working on the summer collection?"

"...ehh--"

"While I shudder slightly every time you do so always waiting for the scream of pain that may or may not ever come from you seriously injuring yourself. Regeneration mysteriously gone, broken form before me destroying my world in an instant. *Blood burning damnable spots upon my hand that shall never wash out.*"

"...."

"M-Melodramatic I know... Deep down I know you're *damn* near invincible... I know I've made you *experience worse for which I give a thousand apologies yet again...* None of this makes me worry any less for your well-being."

Turning around she leaned over in front of the down head, putting her elbows together to hold her chin up. "I *uh*, yeah."

"Why?"

"You know how *Bitch-tits-McGee* went pride rocket on us?"

"...*Believe me I'm trying to...* I don't follow you."

"Rags could fly, Nee-san."

"...You're... You are attempting to evolve yourself *further?*"

"All I know is she was flyin around on her own. That shit would be super fuckin useful, yeah?"

"Ryuko that's precisely the problem, *No one knows a damn thing about this.* You already utilize your bodies unique structure for *unusual purposes*, and you are well aware of *what liquid fuel* spurred on your ability to *grow in such a manner.*"

"..."

"I know you don't like it, but I gave you my body for when you

need it to sustain your standard of living. *They* might be a part of you as you are to them, but *please don't tax them so much*. I am in the pinnacle of health but even I can only donate so much, so often, before people... *notice*. Please focus your studies of *Her manuscripts* on gleaning how one might *suppress such urges* and *long term running on your own*. *Your body is a machine in need of balance Imouto.*"

"I know, but readin that shit is *difficult*... Learnin fuckin French is one thing. The Bitch took *notes in her notes*. Lot of... *failed test subjects in detail*..."

"While *her melding to life fibers* was crude at best in comparison, thus not requiring such... *upkeep*. There is no other collection of such knowledge to scour Ryuko. *And it's specifically what you need to know the most out of anyone*. Study well."

"....Neh, Sats?"

"Hm?"

"Who's yer next meetin with anyways?"

"Simply discussing minor corporate details with Nonon. Fairly positive she will understand the hold up."

"...shit."

"Hmmm?"

"I've got a shoe-box with a week's worth of bras for her in my office that need to be delivered..."

"....W-... *Why do you have such a thing in your possession?*"

"The little shits WAYYY too obsessed with um. Was practically beggin me for more after the first one."

"*I didn't realize you were getting along so well*... No bloodshed?"

"No that still happens on accident. But fuck I wish it kinda wasn't, easier to understand violence. It's a pain in the ass cause her not-tits-"

"Imouto."

"... Her *chicken-breasts* fuckin change a whole cup size over the month apparently. Had to measure her shit again each. Fucking. Time."

Reaching back to her left hip she produced a small red leather bound notebook, ever so slightly bent in the middle length-wise.

"Finally said fuck it and started to write sizes down for reference."

"...*Is there anything you don't keep in there?...* You've officially started the second part of your job then? And *she's* your... first... client?"

"It's not really commission work. She brings the materials and owes me some big fuckin favors for givin up my time to make so much pink shit. I haven't abandoned yer *drawer o' drawers* Eyebrows. Just need to get to the second half of it."

Picking her head up to talk directly to Ryuko's face, she lifted a hand to rub the soft forearm in front of her.

"*Mmm, I look forward to it~...* Tell you what, I'll take a detour down to your floor and deliver it myself? We are meeting at some cafe or another she always insists on a block over."

"A-Appreciate it. Should be on the central table, if not m-might be near the ceiling on the second level... Say where would the spare shirts and shit you mentioned be at? Your office is a barren wasteland compared to the rest of the place."

"It's not a wasteland! I have managed to keep a fern alive in the corner to your right for several weeks successfully *for your information.*"

Taking a glance over her shoulder she spotted a large pot with a very small, very dead, plant in it.

"Sats, I hate to break it to ya, but that shits so dead *I can feel the energy void.* Now I'm not a farmer, but last I checked plants need that great ole sun radiation thing, maybe try closer to the window?"

"... I-Iori was making them, should be down with his department still. *Somewhere.*"

"How the fuck am I suppose to get *there!?* That's your floor, an elevator ride, and his whole friggin department to get through! *They have fuckin stairs!*"

"I apologize for the oversight. In his defense a ready stocked full wardrobe for *any* eventuality takes time to produce I take it. You of all people should know this particularly well."

"..."

"You keep everything from keys to *killer-weaponizable lingerie* in your flesh, *but no emergency clothes?*"

"Clothes have a depressing amount of volume Sats, the dress you

love so much takes up all the spare space in my right leg alone. Would have to collapse a lung or something to store jeans er some shit. *That just ain't comfortable.*"

"Could you repair them here?"

"I haven't figured out a safe way to store *needles inside* just yet, so no."

"That leaves me with *one* idea... *I just don't like it.*"

"eh?"

"Somewhere in this desk is a spare gray raincoat, *Bottom left outer drawer?* It should be long enough to reach your calves, and the collar buttons rather high. Remember to put your shoes back on and get your hair... *down.*"

"Won't people wonder why--"

"This is certainly not the first time you've changed outfits at work on a whim, and it more than likely won't be the last. Embrace the *eccentric artist* label, *realistically you are already fairly odd in every other conceivable way.*"

"So you're tellin me to walk through the black department... *Like a flasher?...* An t-this is *fine!?*"

"*I never said that it was fine... Now do I hear a quiver from fear? Worry? Thinly veiled enthusiasm? Or some mixture of all the above~?*"

"...."

"You've had enough *excitement* for one day Imouto. We are still on the clock, *behave yourself.* And try not to harm Iori, he cares enough to do your blood-work gratis."

"*Next stop business wear and medical torture implement wielding nerds! Go me...*"

Chapter End Notes

Will update character tags for recurring individuals when they show up so as to not spam the tag list.

Red by day

Chapter Summary

"I'm s-sorry, make way!"

"No I reeeally can't sign for that r-right now-"

"Where's Blondie?"

"Iori."

"Thank you."

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The floor she slowly stepped out on was a far cry from her own department. *Too damn sterile*. The eight floors that made up the central black label operations were square rings that surrounded a large open space in the middle. Interior walls separating the outer sections with windows and inner ones. Standing on the uppermost rung she peered down off a railing, ceiling and floors were all white tile kept immaculately clean all the way down. Rows and rows of pristine workstations filled with people working on large screens, everything from basic planing to renders of potential production designs everywhere. No one handled thread or fabric until a design was approved by *whatever kinda over-complicated system they had, no room for artistry*. Hum of automated sewing machines far below coming from the lowest visible level. Wall to wall filled with perfectly neat rows of equipment.

Heading for the stairwells to her right, heads turned as she loudly clicked down four levels to reach an office taking up a quarter of the floor. Bank of opaque windows overlooking the interior space. Various individuals clearing out of the vicinity as she went. These two department leaders very rarely entered the others domain. And whenever they did arguments were almost certain to follow. Satsuki's receptionist had more than likely called ahead to prepare the combat zone, his door was already open.

Let's get this shit over with.

Crossing the threshold into the smaller space she scanned for the *Head Tailor*. Both sides were one way glass all the way across. Entrance of the room containing various machines and a workstation populated with odds and ends. Further down was a gathering of privacy screens, occupied clothing racks, and some lamps overhead pointing down into the *quote organized mess*.

No one home? No, he has to be here. Blondie has never left

early... f-focussss forward Me, f-forty? FORWARD... T-Two heartbeatss, s-standard breathing, tapss on a screen... Smellsss~ FUCK, focus- wait. Smells of... foreigner? "Hey Blondie, that you in the cluster-fuck you call a fitting station? I see yer still abusin the power of auto-matification out there."

Dry response given from within. "Yes, Lady Ryuko, the tailor is in. No they are not *automatons*, we are simply utilizing the latest in software and technology to speed up production times while lowering costs. Efficiency at it's finest, *ma'am*. At some point you should join us in the twenty first century maybe? *Hopefully before it's the twenty-second...*"

"I heard that. You can keep yer soulless drones. My *fucks* might be annoyin assholes half the time, but they get shit done in the other half. *Usually with more flair too*. Far as we know it's workin out, last I checked we're out-sellin you guys!"

Hands in pockets she clicked around the space until she found the entry-point for the spiral of wood partitions. Dozens of half complete prototypes strung up on either side for inspection. In the center was a semicircle of mirrors under lights. Iori was currently measuring a rather buff guy and putting numbers into a *phone-pda-thingy*.

"More people need *basic* clothing than business-wear last I checked. Need I mention Blue is outselling both of us? *And do you mind?* We are in the middle of something here, can it seriously not wait?"

"Nope, yer stuck with me. I'm here cause Sats sent me Blondie. Measurin ain't so time sensitive. Or is this some *woman's sensibility bullshit*? Cause if that's the case don't mind me. No offense to tall, white, and muscle but that don't do it fer me. *Not enough hourglass an boobs....*" Hand gesture added for emphasis.

"Unlike *your people's* seemingly random submission system we have set schedules down here that are kept dutifully and Johann needs to be in a suit next week. I can get to you after I'm done recording the preliminary-."

"Then hurry it up, t-this is important. Also you measured his waist wrong, add four centimeters."

"*Excuse me?* On what grounds! My tape is accurate. How would you even-"

"Read the screen when you circled around. *Fuck it*, hey *Johannesburg* hold yer breath fer a minute."

Gently nudging an annoyed Iori aside by the forehead with a finger she walked around the confused, but obeying, model

standing on a platform in the middle of the circle.

"hmmmm....Seventy-nine waist, eighty-four inseam- *scratch that* make it eighty-three for comfort *dudes a grower- taken, not interested, sorry in that order.* One-hundred-seven chest, so one-hundred-and nine an a half for the blazer, *that's how suit jackets work didn't forget.* Right shoulders a millimeter- *no two higher than the left, stop shifting jackass...*"

Iori's fingers danced on the screen to keep up, not entirely sure if he should be imputing the numbers or recording everything she did for analysis later.

"-Forty an a half inner collar, Fifty-two??? *yeah, seam shoulder, Arm up, Eighty-six to the cuffs, annnnd rest.* Rough numbers good enough, or am I startin again?"

"...For now those are fine-"

"Anythin else you need from him Blondie?"

"...Um, no I think that adds in to the rest to complete the data set. How did you-"

"If you couldn't size up the son a bitch that was tryin to vice grip your neck from behind, you couldn't accurately gouge his eye out on the first try. Second try only worked on the particularly *slow.*"

"..."

"Lucky fer me I learned that before they were also whippin their dicks out! *Good times amiright?*"

"...Of c-course, valuable... *life skill that probably... is?... Thank you, that will be all for today Johann.*"

Man in question donned his shirt and pants before quickly leaving. Door closed on the way out per the usual when the red chief was in the vicinity. Ryuko picked a stool to nonchalantly sit on while Iori stood there with a growing sense of gravity from the earlier statement.

"O-On that *particular bombshell*, what do you need so urgently that you're scaring away my models with tales from your *unfortunate youth.*"

"I gotta return these."

Shirt and skirt were pulled out from the coat collar and tossed haphazardly at the shorter man. Going over them further bringing questions to his mind.

"I indeed made these for Lady Satsuki, why are the sleeves--"

"Cause she wasn't the one wearin em today..."

He sighed "Every item I made for her was tailored specifically for her measurements, I take it you're *close enough* now that she decided to share? *Or are you pilfering each others wardrobes?*"

"While the stitches are itchy, an the busts too tight, it's still easier than goin back to my room and rootin through the rows of costumes in my closet. *Also she might be into the corporate clean look, I dunno yet... Workin REAL well fer me so far.*"

"...I will always respect the privacy of those fitted, but this is the sixth outfit I've gotten back either completely destroyed or otherwise ruined. Both sleeves are basically gone, just how- um, well... *Vigorously* are you- *you disrobing* her? *While good to know you're happily compatible I suppose, could you not slow it down a tad?...*"

"ahem. For your information the first one was when I was drugged by fuck knows what, *Sats told me to drop it but fuck them.* The second through fifth was her being an *irresistible fox in heat* *whisperin Fiber-almighty encouragement to ravish her on the spot* into my ear holes. So on that *take it up with the wife.* This one was not really the fault of either of us, actually it's work related from today."

"The retrieval team came back early I take it?"

"Yeah... *You-could-say-there-was-some-coming-early...*"

"..... But if that was earlier today... Then I imagine the raincoats not a fashion statement."

Ryuko took the opportunity to slide the borrowed coat open enough to show her left leg all the way up to the garter clips. "F-For the record, *this* was Eyebrow's idea. And you tell no one or the apparent *Mistress Ryuko cut's a bitch.* So says the Boss lady, *more or less...*"

".... *Emergency wardrobe establishment order...* I see, then that was... This way."

Leading her back out of the circle they walked over to a specific rack section around the rear of it.

"This one. While not ready for every eventuality yet, *or most for that matter,* I suppose you can take whatever you need already."

Hands went to hangers, flipping from front to back along the row. Frown ever deepening as she went. "No, no, no, fuck no. Blondie this is all three-piece suits an super fancy gowns! Ya got nothing

more casual? Even slightly?"

"When Inumuta informed me of the need for such a collection on hand I assumed it was to be a formal selection for meetings, so I prioritized the most needed items for such important meetings and social functions first. I was not provided any other details or measurements particularly for--"

"I'm sorry, but I can't work in a monkey suit, or whatever the fuck this blue thing is supposed to be? *What is this and why does it have so many fake... folds?*"

"A Victorian style dress for formal balls and galas. Please don't damage it, that one in particular took a fair amount of effort."

She stared at the article held up before her by the shoulders. Studying it from top to bottom.

"This is a corset with sleeves, and over-sized skirt. *But shit the profile it would make... matching maybe, dare I?*"

"Please show it with respect It's a dignified classical piece, *Proper clothing*. Not your brand of re-purposed inner-wear gallivanted in public!"

"*You will not insult my dress collection, she loves them. Also that's muh job Blondie! Now I don't give a shit what it's from.*" Putting it back on its hanger she turned to face him. "But *new plan*. Still need to make somethin cause I'm not walking out there in a *bra an heels* so I'm commandeerin yer sewing-crop-circle. Need various bolts, spools, metric shit ton of pins, and two- *no four* sets of needles... And I'm borrowing this thing for reference. *Chop chop.*"

"Are you going to be making something in your particular manner, right now? Here? *LIKE RIGHT NOW!?!?*"

"Yesss Blondie, how does Sats say it... *I'm bestowing thy meager kingdom with work from the in-resident goddess herself! Something, something, rhyming poetics!...*"

"I have no recording equipment on hand! Could you wait five minutes?"

"Contain the geek out in progress. *Fuck, no*. This shit's gonna take a bit and I got no time for your *nerd-gasaming*. The skirt half alone will take a few hours... *Should I bone it?*"

"Fine, okay! I'll just... stand pressed against the wall! You won't even know I'm there!"

Shaking her head as she walked back into the circle, first fiber line of six already out from underneath the coat as it was

shrugged off grabbing the occupied hanger behind her. Soft tapping of madly typed notes beginning.

"Fiber damn NERDS!... I don't care if this is your office, if you get in the way I throw you out into the desks. I catch you recording my ass then I'm just calling Sats up to beat you for me. And she will too. Now get the stuff I asked for already."

"Color pallet?"

"What do ya think?"

"Yes ma'am!"

He pulled out his phone while running back and forth gathering different small boxes and spools.

"Hello, central material requisitions? I need sample stock from *everything* we have in red transferred to my office yesterday!"

"Yes, this supersedes all current orders."

"Tell the front desk to reschedule the rest of my days appointments to tomorrow."

"Authorization won't be needed, orders come from the top themselves."

Red glow momentarily overpowered the ceiling lamps as she re-positioned the standing mirrors to make room. He redialed quickly after sending an email with the first of many attachments.

"Houka? Listen to me, drop what you're doing."

"Why the sudden--"

"I'm sending you the notes I can write. Catalog them."

"This is... for the lab? She's letting you observe? Wouldn't let me in the same room even during the extended stay. What changed her mind?"

"I can only fathom inspiration took her far beyond caring. No images sadly."

"I'm coming to post security at the door, tell her it's safe to go all out. Keep your head down and do your best to keep up with her motions. Don't attempt to probe the fiber lines for density, she will harm you in retaliation. Learned that the hard way."

"If only I had scanning equipment up here! If we could someday read such fine control impulses and compare them to the tailor's regalia- so much insight into the usage of extra--"

"HEY BLONDIE!"

"Y-Yes Lady Ryuko!"

"Why the fuck are all your forms so flat chested."

"...We don't usually need any of- well, significantly above average size to put it bluntly. I don't have one on hand specifically for you as I have never been provided your-"

"*tsk*. YOU'RE KILLIN ME SMALLS!"

"... *Smalls?*"

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. .
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"Hello Nonon, I apologize for the delay. People to yell at, you *know how it is.*"

"What disaster happened toda- *is t-that what I t-think it is?*"

Satsuki had entered the quiet out of the way eatery and found pink tuft already seated in their usual private booth near the back. Privacy more or less ensured as the owners were particularly grateful for the extremely fair rent. Unassuming plain brown box under her arm had been a task to find in the tornado of cloth and lingerie strung from the ceiling that was Ryuko's *office*.

Taking a seat opposite she deposited the box in question and slid it toward the other-side. Wait staff given a simple order for tea today.

"*I was instructed very specifically on what plunder to seize from her vault, so as to ensure I took the correct rectangular storage prism from the dungeon of silks and panties~.*"

"I... Thanks. You're *still* not telling Red to get her work-space cleaned up? That place is a fire hazard citation waiting to happen, or worse..."

"*Mmmm~*, She's probably the safest person in the building in that regard. Nothing to really worry about there, more importantly she is free to organize her spaces as she wishes. And she uses both floors worth of office with an efficiency that broke even Inumuta's records. *The numerous blocks to direct line of sight have allowed her to work from floor to ceiling.* Supposedly having everything out in the open is also beneficial to her *creative process.*"

"And you believe it's not just her being lazy *because...*?"

"Lazy wouldn't involve *aerial maneuvering* to reach filing cabinets full of indexed sketches. She has also done similar at home.

Frequently dumping my entire undergarment supply onto our bed before starting work on their replacements. *Might have an ulterior motive alongside that though, I know for a fact she has taken dives into the pile. Yet to catch her in the act.*"

"..."

"Excuse me... Terribly sorry for opening with excessive pleasantries, shall we get down to the *business* as it were? *Nonon?*"

"Y-YEAH! yeah... T-There isn't really that much to talk about in an *official* capacity today Satsuki. Some quantities need your approval for the account, slight changes to overhead fees due to cost shifts. Typical pencil pusher stuff honestly. *Taking a break from talking shop sounds j-just fine.*"

"Then comes the more personal business at hand, *hmm?*"

"I *uh*, assume you mean this box's contents..."

"A *sound deduction* my dear Watson. It is my understanding that you have somehow convinced *my bundle of inappropriate energy* to donate some of it and her time for the creation of some exclusively pink brassiere's. *For favors?*"

"She wouldn't take my money, so I owe her a couple unlimited *I owe you's.*"

"...And what pray tell is the nature of these? She is not one to accept vague promises of debt so easily without *significant* gain to be had. *When serious her negotiations take no prisoners...*"

"Satsuki I know people, *who know people*. When I say unlimited, I mean *Unlimited*. She has like five now unfortunately for me saved up, used one to prove their worth."

"Might I be privy to the details? Or does the clause in your agreement guaranteeing client confidentiality in *all* transactions carry weight here?"

"*She didn't say I couldn't tell you...* When she first said it I thought she was joking and laughed! Then I *cried a little* when she said she was serious..."

A waitress came up to deliver the ordered tea. Thanking the gracious teenager before slowly taking a first sip, she rose a brow. Signal to continue.

"... E-Eight kilograms of meteorites."

Satsuki had to put the cup down as her throat spasmed from shock. Coughing into her arm to dampen the sound. Worried waitress waived

off with a *"T-Thank you, I'll be fine"*.

"H-How much?"

"Counting for the currency conversions and traveling overseas... *less than you would think, but more than I would like. Something around, now before anything hasty let's be honest we can afford larger purchases, um n-nine point five million yen give or take a couple hundred grand."*

"... I told her to charge well but... *That might be a bit much for a bra. I can repay-*"

"Don't. I was the idiot that gave her those favors. A few... *million... every so often won't break the bank."*

"*The security of capitalism. Might I inquire why you are so calm about potentially shoveling fortunes into strappy-strips of fabric?"*

"Because *you're literally sitting on a goldmine Satsuki. Having bought the mass produced stuff from your- her? Brand it's still comfortable as hell don't get me wrong. But Hot-damn Red's weird style of constructed undergarments are a whole new level. I know you're wearing some right now, only an idiot wouldn't with direct access to the real deal."*

Smiling she rubbed her knees together for a bit. "*Mmmm~... I admit you wouldn't be wrong on that count. I can't say I understand it fully, but she has indeed made concentrated efforts to introduce me to the world of proper materials. Which leads me into another, rather important question...*"

"W-What?"

Hands folded by empty cup, Satsuki stared into it's last dregs. Continuing in a near whisper.

"I will lead with an apology. I know for a fact that I have been *emotionally stunted* for some time in certain capacities. But while slow in such fields *I am aware* that many people developed many different *feelings* over the course of my rebellion's existence. *I know we talked about, us...*"

Nonon froze. Small fork held in her left hand dropping to nearby plate.

"S-Satsuki that was a while ago..."

"And yet relevant once again, *Hmm?"*

"I-I-I... d-don't-"

"As per any such undertaking, I sought information before officially starting the campaign for... Ryuko's unusual heart. In my search for *how to do such a thing* I found many voices on the subject... *Including what I grew to understand as yours.*"

Pink eyes grew wider still.

She didn't... There's no way. "M-My v-voice? I can sing, b-but t-that's pretty hard to-"

"...The full moon's light cast long shadows within the confines of our sanctuary from the turmoil and strife. Place of designated neutrality among the clouds. Anger melts to passion. Calm facade breaks it's bindings to release emotion from within once more. Our two forms, bloody and bruised, making contact again and again. No longer trading blows but words of desire, and regret, underneath sheets of white. Empty threats to beat the other into submission charged by day. Promises to embrace kept by night... "

SHE DID! Her mind was blanking. Breathing threatening to stop lest it interrupt the whisper from across. Specific tongue giving sound to thoughts never spoken aloud. Never meant for her to say.

"... Outsiders were sometimes swept into the whirlwind of secretly entangled legs and lips...

SHE FOUND THE BLOG. I'M DEAD.

"While... *unorthodox*, I was able to find peace with another equally tortured soul... And from my privileged position I understand that *She* is magnetic. I don't blame you. Believe me I can comprehend why your thoughts might drift to her when faced without..."

Silence answering she pressed on.

"I can't blame you for desiring the sun Icarus. A form cast aside from the same mold as I, built by... reforged to foist the hopes of the few in honor of the many. Artificial eyes casting a rapturous gaze filled with pools of her thoughts... No matter how seemingly odd, or indecent. As you have found out, touch unknowingly sharing blurbs of emotion that cross her mind when she forgets to silence them. You looked upon her as a fill in, but you did not act. You did not care, not until you were given the fruit of her touch. And why you sought such contact again and again. I inadvertently put you into direct contact with Asmodeus herself. Twice."

"...Y-You're not mad?"

Rush of air from her nose, a mirthless chuckle. "So you do not deny playing her hand for contact?"

"*Lying to you is pointless... She does make good sh- stuff.*"

"No, I am not mad. *I would be the last person fit to judge forbidden feelings my friend... I'm telling you this for your own... safety. Find a new muse Nonon. I can stay my hand readily, take a step back to see the big picture. Talk about things as adults. Do note that this does not mean I would be complacent at anyone seeking to steal my precious persnickety Waifu.*"

"N-NOPE! I w-would never TAKE-... I'm not *that* kind of... asshole. B-But... my safety?"

"Mmmmm... Ryuko is rather unaware of what you have been doing while overly absorbed in her work. *More annoyed at the complications in producing Multiple items for your person. I don't doubt your personal defense skills, but I don't give you, or anyone really, very good odds if she were to find out.*"

She stepped out of the booth, re-positioning to sit next to Nonon. Hand awkwardly patting her reassuringly on the shoulder.

"*And I'd rather you not die. Not good for business~.*"

Pinkette's face taking on a questioning look. Eyes glancing at arm resting next to her.

"*I am still working on social interaction, was this inappropriate?*"

"N-No Satsuki that's fine... *Whats on your arm under the jacket?*"

"*I see your senses have not dulled with time. It's a bandage for my upper forearm.*"

"*IS THAT BURLAP BITCH HURTING YOU!?!"*

"*Hold thy sharp tongue. No, never in a million moons would she do such a thing. Even to her own detriment...*

"Am I missing something?"

"I-It's from donating blood."

"...We freaking save the world and you're *still* being the perfect ruler? *How are the rest of us supposed to compete with that Satsuki!... What, one not good enough for you!?"*

"Worry naught... *One is far and away enough of a headache, now Ryuko on the other-hand... I don't actually know... She's made the jump to a stable singular relationship well enough. Still a great many people at varying levels admiring her to fend off...*"

"..."

"Whether she knows it or not. Evidence points that my choice to put an actual ring on her being more worthwhile by the day."

"Life isn't fair..."

"Considering our lifetimes, any of us could have told you that for a long time."

"... I need better karma, next time you're donating take me with you!"

To an outside observer she made a small movement to pull her arm back and give her companion space on the bench. To someone used to watching every movement of her Lady for years, it was a shocking retreat from her confidence.

"Satsuki?"

"It's... a private donation."

"The hell is a private donation!? Isn't that every donation aside from drives?"

"...This... wasn't for the Red Cross."

"What? Then what could- Oh... right, lab nonsense because Kiryuin? Sorry."

"Not... quite... They are not involved."

"Then what in the hell...?"

"... Come to the estate around ten. That's all I can say in public... I suppose you deserve to know that which you have been dragged into. But you must keep all of this to yourself. At all costs Nonon."

"R-Rather cryptic Satsuki."

"Oh, I promise you things won't get much clearer. Unfortunately I must be off, ever more meetings."

"S-Satsuki!"

Hand going out to grab a sleeve before she could get up.

"Hmm?"

"H-How much did you read?"

"Enough to know you almost broke operational security~. Don't

think you're off the hook my friend, I just wish for you to know the rabbit hole you've dug yourself into."

Chapter End Notes

Not actually happy with the latter half. It could be better. It get's me into 5 roughly enough though. May or may not redo it.

Crimson by moonlight

Chapter Summary

"S. Kiryuin speaking."

"What do you mean she never returned to the department?"

"Continue via protocols, I have two more meetings to get through."

"Yes, I have a good idea where she is."

"No, this is not a cause for concern."

I hope...

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

It was just moments after seven. Appropriations meetings finally over Satsuki headed down through the emptying building to find where her missing executives disappeared to. Footsteps echoing in the open atrium, she approached a very tired looking Inumuta sitting on a chair beside the door to Iori's office.

"Houka?"

He jumped a little before standing up to greet her properly.

"L-Lady Satsuki! I didn't hear you were coming down. Something the matter?"

"It's late, I was going to ask you the same."

"Forgive my appearance, today has been full of opportunity *and* manual labor. A great many deliveries to sort and return while organizing data."

"Data? *Deliveries?*" Right hand pinched the bridge of her nose.
"*What hath mine wife done today?*"

"She hijacked Iori and his office to produce something. I have not been informed *what* precisely or why, but they went through quite the number fabric types in the process. *She also finally gave us an enormous amount of Kinesiological data regarding her extra prehensile appendages. Such precision in complicated work...* Half a mind to see if I can teach her touch typing."

"*She was under extremely important agreement to not do such a thing here Inumuta.*"

"P-*Proper* precautions were taken before authorization was agreed, ma'am. The room has not been breached by anyone but myself for the few hours I was here. Nothing outwardly unusual was noticed by staff I assure you. Officially she was here to collaborate on a possible prototype design thus both officers were unavailable for the rest of the day. *Which was technically true.*"

"Head back to square away the night security shift. I'll handle things here. *Thank you.*"

With slight bow he returned a borrowed office chair to it's nearby desk and started towards the elevators with a stretch. Bracing for *anything* she opened the door and stepped inside. Taken aback immediately by the uncharacteristic mess of materiel strewn about Iori's work space. Hundreds of rolls of different patterned fabrics stacked and thrown around to create a sea of red hues. Ryuko's customary string rigging system coming down from the ceiling to disappear behind the walls taking up the rooms center at Iori's behest. Tailor in question was standing on stacked items and peering over a divider. Thumbs still flying on the screen illuminating his chest. Visible red ropes arcing up and down above the scene freezing after a second.

"SSatss!?"

"Ma'am? *What are you talking about-* Lady Satsuki!"

"...What have you two been doing in here exactly?"

"Lady Ryuko has been produci-"

"Get in here SSatss!"

Red vine had worked it's way over the mess unseen to spring up and wrap twice around one of Satsuki's wrists.

"Ry-RYUKO!"

The force was gentle, but consistently tugging her off balance and toward the spiral's entrance. Ducking around and occasionally under more bolts of fabric. Leading her past Iori's elevated observation position and toward the epicenter. Coming to a stop when another line circled her waist to stop her from falling over. Looking up she was directly staring at a blue ball gown hung up on a divider.

"Imouto I strictly forbade you from utilizing these outside controlled environments."

"Lasst I checked we own the building, yeah? *That'ss pretty controlled.*"

"*Last I checked,* we have a few hundred employees that don't need

to know certain information *that is very much on a need to know basis*. Blue?"

"Blondie'ss. *Other-way Eyebrowss*."

Turning around after being released, light from the lamps bounced off the hanging form to fill her vision. Vines retreating from around the circle to coil behind their still half naked owner beside it.

"Imouto... It's... missing some pieces?"

"Am I? We forget anything Blondie?"

"*Well, you could have added more details to the piece. Maybe a second color for a two tone appearance. Your skin and the gold might fulfill that though.*"

"I meant that there is *nothing* in the front from the waist to neck *but fine gold chains*. And the skirt on one of those is supposed to be closed all the way around. *Especially in the front.*"

"The lady bitss er covered. SSidess pull in fer the nipss, got a mini pedi-cot-sskirt-thing below."

"*Petty-coat, Lady Ryuko.*"

"What he ssaid. Weeeeee? What'ya think?"

"A costume?"

"It'ss ssuppose to be a fancy dinner dresss..."

"*Chains across, sleeves have gold trim at the top, sword sheath clasp... You sexualized another officer's uniform?*"

"*Eyebrowss, I'm, PART, ssexualized uniform-sss... Fiber that'ss weird ta ssay out loud...*"

"...I was simply making an observati-on." ...*Her speech is slurring more than usual, pupils dilated, subconscious unwillingness to retract fibers... sexually aroused... Which means we do NOT have time for this. "It's about as unusual as anything you've made, harkens to both military and... fantasy themes? I suppose you are a form of mage sometimes Hmmm~... Iori it's getting late, are you finished for the day?"*

"If this production is done I will begin cleaning up the mess before heading out."

"Would you please call for a corporate car to be out front, and find her a dress bag? Your work has been appreciated as always. I wish you a good day."

"It will be done."

Blonde tailor dropped from his perch and headed out from the room for the deliveries elevator with a roll of cloth over his shoulder.

"SSatsss I can sstill drive--"

"No, no you can't. You're already losing the great gift of speech Imouto. I'm terribly sorry, but I am not putting you behind the wheel of a vehicle that's going to be driving past hundreds of thousands of people. You're impaired."

"But I'm not impaired! I hear everything SSatsss!... SSo many varied beatsss sso closss....."

"No means no. Besides that fine creation is not going to fit anywhere in the car. Your chariot will be safe in the corporate garage. Cut your dress down so it can be bundled properly and let's get you home. SOONER rather than later."

"Fuck that I might not be wearin red glovess and gartersss, but I'm wearing that outta here Eyebrowsss."

"It looks awfully complicated, how do you even put it--"

With a roughly calculated leap she rose up into the rigging, ceiling supports groaning under the sudden weight. Bra and gloves dissolved into her torso, naked form waltzed around lines anchored to various parts of the dress to keep it in shape. Supports meant to keep the production airborne were severed here and there as she went. Sliding down both feet where dropped through the open upper back. Zipper going down to the waistline was undone under her rear before settling on it, one on the back of it's neck section shortly after. Fiber lines finally retracted she slid her butt into the hole and somehow contorted her hips through it's thin waist. Heels producing a light thunk on Iori's wood fitting platform.

Now able to support it directly the final two strings on either side of the neck where snipped from the high collar and arms threaded into shoulder-less robe-like sleeves before zipping herself into the assembly. Material in the front readjusted to cover the tips of her chest, fine chains stretched across horizontally every few centimeters pulled to her skin. Internal fibers aiding her to work unseen miraculous cloth mechanics to cinch the top to an *incredibly* tight fit. Arms flew as she removed every trace of the structural support threads around it. Standing back up she took a step toward nearby mirror bank to inspect her work.

"Neck, check. Titsss, tucked. Waissst, tight. SSleeveesss... good enough. Ready to roll SSatsss!... SSatsss?"

"...."

Her cheeks were flushed and eyebrows near hairline.

She turned dress fitting into naked performance art. "O-Okay. I-... I Stand corrected."

Woman in red half turned with an inquisitive expression, taking on a more hungry look after reading Satsuki's vitals.

"You know Nee-SSan, elementss of corssetry can do WONDERSS for the form when the wearer need not breath. And judgin by your heart-rate sspike, expresssion, an ever sso sslight sshift in sscent~... M-Misssion accomplisshed?"

Phone pulled from her pocket, she used speed dial to call Iori. Eyes not leaving Ryuko's rather predatory canine smile.

"Iori? Car's reporting ready? GOOD. S-Scratch that bag order, we'll be fine. *Thank-you-once-again-goodnight!*"

Simple message delivered in single breath before hanging up abruptly. She grabbed Ryuko's hand and kissed it on the knuckle.

"My Red goddess, thy reluctant feast awaits. Render unto me thy patience to travel with haste. Did you have to produce THIS, today!? Of all days, the one we can't just go back and have a proper romp!?"

"HAHAHA!... The um, lunch left me rather depleted. Much more than usssual. Iori'sss office wasss much more likely to remain empty of people.... SSo I wouldn't... you know... go nutsss."

"Bordering madness and still working. You could have just made some clothes and gone home... The bottles will need to be prepped... Just- Why?"

"Well... ssomeonesss gotta thank you for ssticking yer neck out fer me. Eh, literally, in a way."

Grabbing both sides of her face elder smashed their mouths together for a brief moment before grabbing her hand again and rushing for the elevators. Chains threatening to pop as they ran.

"OI! SSATSSS THISSS WASSS NOT MADE FOR RUNNING!"

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So the cafe chat went... unexpectedly well enough, what could

possibly be going on that they aren't telling anyone?

Nonon found herself waiting on the front porch of the Kiryuin residence under the light from a nearly full moon. Windows glowing an inviting yellow around sections of the building. Three tries at the doorbell at the front so far. Nervous wait making her glance back to check if her pink sedan was still parked down the drive for the fifth time. Sound of the door finally overcoming the cold breeze startling her back to attention.

"I a-apologize for the wait N-Nonon, d-do come in."

A blushing Satsuki invited her inside. Careful eyes running a sweep of their yard before closing the entrance. Ever the gracious host, she took Nonon's light jacket to a closet nearby.

"So Satsuki, what am I here for tonight? *Am I going to be brainwashed or something to forget what I know... and what's with the face?*"

"*Not wearing pants either... problematic. You will not be men in blacked Nonon. If I'm referencing the correct motion picture. But over the nights proceedings your continued breathing is particularly important, so I'm giving you an advanced warning.*"

"W-What?"

"*Don't ye tempt fate and antagonize her, at all cost. In any way. I MEAN IT!*"

"...Pants? Breathing!? Still being kinda cryptic there."

"*Crypt... amusingly fitting in an odd way... N-Never-mind. I already told you this won't make much sense, at least for a bit. I will assume you remember the way to our lovingly not-so-humble library, approach with caution. I will be heading to the kitchen for refreshments and promise to be with you both as quickly as I can.*"

"*Don't piss of Red? I'll say it again, I can try but no-*"

Firm grasp spun her around. Cold eyes giving force to a firm message.

"*I mean it Nonon, this is not a night for initiating confrontation. I told you to come because it's important. Also... k-keep your legs closed, crossed preferably.*"

".....O-kay? Orders understood Lady Satsuki."

Separating, she was directed down a hallway to the right. Thoughts trying to figure out *why such odd warnings* disrupted by a heavy voice that made her pause.

Fancy new speakers? Holy shit that's some quality.

Drawn to unexpected auditory bliss she kept going, finally close enough to make out the words only bringing on more confusion.

"...the caul-caul groon...

Where aforeee, many more huv gaun...

Lay me doonn, in the caul-caul groonnn...

Wheeeere aforee, many more huv gaun...."

Wait, this sounds like... RED!?

Pace picked up she stopped near the closest door, large room beyond only lit by the night sky. Putting her back to the wall she shifted to the frame for a better listening position.

"... When they come, a wull staun ma groon...

Staunnn ma groonnn, al nay beee afraaid...

Thoughts awe h-home, tak away ma fear...

Sweaat an blood, hide ma veilll awe tearsss..."

She had to get a better position, there was no fucking way this was Ryuko singing. Yet the tone would match her range... Ducking low she moved around the door-frame and took up a forward position behind a reading desk. Finally peeking around the corner to figure what was going on across the room. Breath hitched once again today at the sight lit by moonlight.

Perched lengthwise on a seat filling a bay window across from the door lazed one familiarly scantily-clad young woman under the moon's light. Life fibers tell-tale red hue twinkling all along her bare form and beyond. Several tentacles free of their home in her shoulders and thighs stretched all around her. Coiling here and there in what can only be assumed comfortable defensive positions. Slowly pulsing dim light in the dark. One occupied line was curled downward from above holding a book in-front of her face, pages flipped every few seconds, lit softly by her own bangs. Another line lazily circling a patch of white far above her. Third line coming to a rest after replacing an unmarked wine bottle among multiple in a square cooler nearby on the floor, round glass half full of an almost black held by the bowl held in her left hand. Left leg slowly swinging red toes across the massive rug that covered the libraries floor. Face frowning, heavenly deep voice still carried into the darkness.

"...Ain's a year, say a prayerrr faurrr meee..."

Closee yer eyesss, an remember meee...

Na'ir moreee, shall a see the sunnn...

Forrr I felllll, tay a german's gunnn...

Lay me doonnn, in the caul-caul groon...

Where afore, many more huv gaun...

Lay me doon, in the caul-caul groonnn...

Wheere afore, many more huv gaunnn...

Wheeeere aforeee, many more huv gaunnnn...."

That... That was fucking GOOD!? How- When- What!? SWEET FUCK SINCE WHEN DID RED HAVE PIPES!? She's drinking again. Just what is going on here?

"Lorsque le sang est le vin ne le chant des coeurs imiter la vigne?"

Was that French? W-When blood is wine... singing hearts imitate... vine? But, that doesn't make much sense.

"Qu'en dites-vous serpent dans la tapis?"

What say you snake... in the... carpet- MY LEG!

Roughly pulled to the side, hands failed to grab hold of anything, she was slung airborne by the ankle over furniture and into the middle of the room with a shriek. Thrashing stopped by three more lines restricting her other limbs.

SHIT-SHIT-SHIT- "RED THE FU-" Don't antagonize her at all cost... Not wearing pants a problem... I see. "...H-Hi Re- um, L-Lady-officer-Ryuko?"

Slowly she was shifted down and over. Hanging upside down before a very melancholic Face. Heavy smell of iron blown out with every surprisingly soft word.

"Elle est juste Ryuko, nain rose. Pourquoi etes-vous ici en enfer avec moi fille?"

"F-Fine, fine! No titles! I w-was invited by Satsuki?"

"...Puis ma femme est devenu fou."

"She is the sanest!- ... uh well, I mean y-you're both very highly functional for being so- wait no t-that's... um... ummm.... T-That was some actually good singing you d-did there! W-What was that

lovely tune? I am unfamiliar with it."

"Sargent MacKenzie. *It's not a lovely tune, it's a lament... For the dead...*"

"O-Oh...yeah, it- HIM! S-Sorry. W-What are you drinking by any chance? *It smells kinda... metal?*"

"*Eyebrows has some explaining to do. If she already let ya get this far into the train-wreck that is the nature of my continued existence... Kiryuin Sanguine mixed Merlot, vintage nineteen-ninety-five.*"

"...Ninety-five? I thought you were an alcoholic not a wine snob-ENTHUSIAST! *Let's go with that.* W-Was it a um, g-good year?"

"*I'd say it was, but it's cause that's when she was born... Fiber knows where I would be now had she not. Probably killing people with complete disregard for their lives, plans, futures... families... reveling in the pain of it all.*"

It took a few seconds for Nonon to put it together. Sudden realization turning her pale, raising a suspicious brow from her captor. Fear for her life coming with a rush of bile she forced back. Eventual rage blowing all reason to the wayside.

"YOU ACTUAL UNHOLY ABOMINATION, W-WHAT IN THE FUCKING-FUCK! *WHY THE FUCK!?!"*

"*Why? Why, why? Not a confirmation of what, or maybe when. But why?*"

"....Are you fucking getting high on this shit!?"

"*It's not shit, it's terrifyingly-monstrously-glorious to the palette. The finest substance to pass tender lips... Do I have to spell it out for you miss-ruffled-boyshorts-the-voyeur? ...I know who designed those actually... huh, that's a weird feeling. Do they sit right on yer ass? There was a concern they could wedge on their own.*"

"....I don't have a fucking clue why you would be going full NOSFERATU! AND STOP STARING AT MY PANTIES YOU- YOU... GROTESQUE-GAUZE-PERVERTED-POPLIN-VIOLENT-VIYELLA-VAMPIRIC-VELOUR-LECHEROUS-LYCRA-LESB- GAHH!!"

Vines tightened painfully around her limbs. The sensation of angry sparks a burning under her skin around them. Ryuko's frown deepening with an edge thrown into her voice.

"*Typical. THAT was uncalled for, you bitch. YOU come to THIS HOUSE and insult me for shit I KNOW is fucked! There was also a rather private moment you just interrupted as well... So I'm going to*

raid YOUR privates. Fair is fair, you pay the penalty... although if I'm reading you right... you're really enjoying these moments?"

"Y-Y-Y-You Seersucker-bloodsucker-GAHHHH!!!...W-W-What's the penalt-YYY!!!!!"

A fifth line had hooked thin pink fabric over her lower lips. As she was tossed back across the room the pair was forcefully separated from her legs. Landing face first she kept rolling over, stopping when she hit the far wall with a groan. Dizziness shaken off she quickly shifted to a kneeling position after hearing a clink from the hall. Pulling knives out of her hat to form a cross held up in Ryuko's direction. Satsuki finally turning up almost dropped the tray of tea and sweets she carried at the sight of what she assumed to be Nonon's panties being waved as a victory flag near the ceiling... *alongside her own white thong.*

"Honestly not even FIVE minutes... I rushed when I heard yelling. What did you do Nonon?"

"WHAT DID I DO!? EXCUSE MY LADY SATSUKI BUT WHAT THE FUCK ARE YOU TWO DOING HERE!! SHE'S FUCKING DRINKING YOUR- FUCK!!!... ALL I... I... Tried to sneak up and listen to some singing... A-AND SHE FUCKING ALMOST VIOLATES ME FOR IT!!"

"I ask for patience, please put those away. While she's rather protective of her vocal talents to the point of paranoia, gods forbid anyone think less of her should they hear her sing or some such nonsense... What else have you done to draw her ire?"

"..."

"Pink bitch comes out of nowhere and starts spewing vitriol at me. So she paid the penalty. Why is Fiber-damn Pinky here Sats? Specifically, NOW!? Visiting hours at this particular zoo ended hours ago."

Tray was carefully deposited on a nearby reading desk. Taking a seat she flicked a lamp on and helped Nonon to the one around the corner to her left. Cups were filled for each of them. Tray prepared for a long night.

"It's because of your whims that we are in dire need of her, Imouto. Please have some tea Nonon. While I apologize for her... behavior, I did warn you. She is currently in an altered delicate state of mind. Bare with us."

"Satsuki why are t-there are two pairs of panties up there by the ceiling..."

"...B-Because she was very much unaware of your visit tonight. It's been a long day... things happened..."

"Eyebrows had to pay the penalty for trying to leave without giving me my reward for *finally* getting to drill her--"

"RYUKO MATOI KIRYUIN YOU WILL STOP RIGHT T-THIS INSTANT!"

"Fucking *why* Sats? She already knows I'm drinking one of your bodies *wonderful* fluids. It's not like telling her about the second one I want to *enjoy* would be so much worse just because it's from your cun--"

"RYUKO!... W-When all is said and done *I will give you whatever the FUCK amount of THAT you want until I am unconscious I s-so swear*. So for the love of all that's right in the universe *pleeease temper thy fiber enhanced desire* in the name of common decency. *I don't ever ask for much...*"

Nonon was completely red. Satsuki's face was buried behind her hands, equally colored. Third member present to the *apparently scheduled without her consent* meeting simply debating the merits of exsanguination of a certain pink intruder that stole her prize. Bitterly stopping herself when she realized she was salivating at the thought.

"...W-Whatever, *fuck you too assholes... I'll just be here... being an animal... again...*"

"Imouto please don't take it so personally... I understand you're not to blame for your *wildly ranging moods while partaking of my life-blood*, but leverage the benefits to read."

"Oh joy, how to skin a cat! *Totally important information that should not be lost to the ages, I await with baited breath for the next volume. How to dismember dogs perhaps!? Maybe another dozen pages of how I SHOULD BE GUTTING MICE AFTER PRACTICING MIND STITCHING ON THEM!*"

"Please stop being facetious--"

"I'm not joking! *SHE WROTE HOW TO SKIN A FIBER-DAMN CAT!* The more I read the worse it fucking gets... *She started referencing you at this point by the way...*"

"...I honestly don't doubt it, but you must carry ever onward. *Glean what you can from between the lines if you must.*"

"You're making her *read*? While she just casually *DRINKS PART OF YOU!?*"

"She needs to know more about her fibers and *that wicked tome* is just one of those comprising *The Director's* research notes. Of course she sometimes rebels and picks something else off the shelf instead, *usually war related*, but I'm fine with that so long as

she is reading instead of using that time for... self pleasuring."

"...Can you finally tell me what's going on Satsuki?"

"The long version or the short version?"

"The understandable one?"

"...Fair enough. After birth her infant form was infused with a bundle of fibers. The shock of surgery forced it to take one of two options, either let it's new host die and die with her. Or surrender to the fragile host's body and survive as a piece of her. It mercifully chose to integrate. Over the course of her early life Father tried to stem the growth with injected inhibitor compounds, but they failed to do more than give her trypanophobia. Which is part of the problem. Still with me?"

A pause to drink. Hand swatting a fiber line attempting to steal a plate of cookies away. *"Not until you're done Imouto."*

"...Probably? Why is the personal history lesson relevant?"

"Getting there. So she grew and grew as all young people do, and her fibers grew with her. Every organ, bone, and muscle infused completely. *And this infusion is the crux of our dilemma."*

"She was fine according to the reports, what's the problem? Something change?"

"We have not been entirely... *forthcoming...* with specific pieces of information. *Particularly of recent.* To put it bluntly a *certain case of incredibly rough, bloody, drugged, sex."*

Nonon stopped herself from making a squeak "B-But i-it worked out, right!?"

"Oh it was quite an eventful night that ended positively for the most part. Unfortunately it also brought out her... there really is no way to sugar coat it. Inherent Life fiber instincts. All living things have certain driving forces to varying degrees. Due to the complete infusion to the core of her entire being she shares those of her more exotic half. The desire to feast on Human energy and blood is in her skull. Thus the full truth we hide from everyone is that my lovely lovely Imouto, is in fact a fully functioning Life Fiber hive that has grown powerful, strong, and unfortunately dependent on an alternative food source to keep her sane. Which only got worse when she managed to surpass her bodies caloric input limit and inadvertently started leveraging the taken in blood to fuel her growth beyond said former limit. This is where you come in Nonon. We are in need of a phlebotomist so I can safely keep her fed while we work on how to curb a craving written in DNA, of a body built to harvest."

"...You're asking me, to pull blood from you, to *FEED* your *panty-stealing-succubus-wife*... So she does not succumb to being an apex predator!?"

"No power comes free Nonon, especially that which saved us all from death. And it's not so much me asking, as ordering- I beg your pardon but one moment please."

She poured a fresh, piping hot, cup of tea and dabbed a napkin in it. Scolding liquid safe for transport she shoved it quickly under the table to make contact with a vine that had been attempting to sneak it's way into a rather sensitive position up her core for one reason or another. Eliciting a yelp from the body that shot up into a sitting position by the window. Fiber line bumping the table on it's hasty retreat across the floor back to it's owner's side.

"Imouto... Would you be so kind as to stop trying to insert yourself into my womanhood, And return our unmentionables? *For me?*"

"...Y-You get one pair. Choose wisely oracle of eyebrows past and future."

"Ryuko..."

Book was closed with a snap and shifted to follow behind her as she got up. Glass drained she handed it to a second vine while a third was sent to grab a bottle as she walked. *Flags* dropped into her grasp, one in each hand. Feet moving silently along as she got to the desk.

"What's it gonna be Sats~?"

Sighing as she rubbed a temple, it was not a difficult choice. *It was an annoying one. "Guests first."*

Ruffled cloth lazily lobbed toward the pinkette was caught like a frantic lifeline and hastily re-donned with embarrassment. Still hostage damp white fabric was raised to her face with left hand, deep breath taken through it before she bit the cotton strip with a smile blotched with dark red. Faint pink tones unknowingly bleeding into the material. Replies muffled by it.

"Ryuko, I put up with your games to a point. *Don't push it.*"

"Ah, mais les jeux commencent tout juste ce soir mon cher~!"

"Is that so hmm~? Mais je suis un peu fatigué de travailler toute la journée, ma femme. A ce rythme, je vais avoir un mal de tête de toute façon. Une tragédie! Non?"

Toothy smile fell to an open frown. Posture deflating at the

threat of a more wholesome night.

"Will you sit and behave yourself for me?"

"...The house was supposed to be fair game Nee-san... And you practically yanked me home for this."

"Except?"

Defeated, silent feet padded further forward. Form dropped into the wooden chair across from her with a scowl. Cursed black book still floating somewhere behind her head, spare lines coiled on the floor around their table. Open hands receiving bottle and glass to place them on it's surface.

"When we have guests..."

"Mmmhmm. Now if you're not going to give them back to me today at least remove them from your mouth. It makes you sound stupid."

"When isn't she?"

"OI!"

"HUSH! Children... I'm going to regret this, but I don't care what you do with it. Just take it out of your mouth. And she has had us fooled Nonon, she merely pretends to be academically challenged."

"Pretends? I'm not trying to be mean Satsuki, but she barely passed any classes. It's a wonder you actually got a high-school diploma Airdura-Alucard."

"Mmmm, and thus you are yet another individual caught in her web of games. Nonon, are you aware of the structure of individual life fiber threads?"

"Not particularly, wasn't my department, why?"

"Each one can function both as nerve and muscle at the same time. Essentially infinite chains of neurons forming the hive, all connected to her own gray matter to call upon for whatever purpose she requires of them. She plays stupid because she refuses to utilize this in her day to day. Most likely because they follow a different path of reasoning which alters her- RYUKO!... case in point."

She had pulled the white fabric from her teeth and noticed the blood seepage throughout the cotton strip during Satsuki's explanations of *something boring*. Giving it two seconds thought, *the blood would stain these need to pull it out with fibers but how*, she handed them off to a vine that disappeared under the table. Followed by her suddenly shifting upward in her seat to accommodate it. Fiber lingerie doing nothing to hide the secondary

effects of such an action to her body. Nonon using all her willpower to stare at the steaming liquid remaining in her cup.

"Y-You said you didn't care! Bite me Eyebrows, I'm dying here."

"You're the one that should be biting, and as far as we know you physically can't. So hush. And you're forgetting to drink, how many left?"

"...Three bottles, including most of this one."

"Less stuffing yourself with my unmentionables, more drink."

Finally complying she slumped back down again, took the bottle and chugged her wine-blood mixture to drone out the ongoing conversation.

"...Do you have evidence of this? Cause frankly I don't buy it."

"She learned fluent french in a week so she could read Ragyo's notes, yet just barely remembers our post address. She knows the complete body measurements for every female model in our company, herself, you, and me yet has trouble with basic addition in checkout lines. She is in fact astronomically intelligent, but only when she wants to be for the most part. Today is the exception. Which is why it worked out very well for you to come tonight."

"What's so different about her Blood-chug-night?"

"She's feeding, she can't NOT leverage her fibers for a computational boost when they are all active and taking in the blood to transfer it into some form of internal storage. At this time she can be more logical, philosophical, moody, and... aroused as you can probably tell... Absolutely fantastic intellectual conversation to be had when she stays on topic and not succumbing to errant lewd thoughts."

Right hand still holding the green container Ryuko's left went up to to point a fiber covered index finger out to make her pause. Slightly lifting the upside down receptacle, a shake was given to get the last few drops out, evidently empty she handed it to yet another vine to put back into the cooler. Lips licked clean she was going to argue, before stopping herself. Realization that she just did *all of that* in front of someone else without a second thought. Embarrassment at how far gone she is overpowering the reading lamp momentarily. Vine sent for a full bottle to occupy her mouth instead of continuing.

"The important thing is she is less likely to just fly to anger and more likely to be reasoned with, and considering her lack of threats to end your existence that is still true. As a whole things are going rather well. All I require is a spot of help

drawing my blood in the strictest of confidences, now more than ever with the store opening across from headquarters in June."

"...And if I refuse to join the *insane party*?"

"Mmmmm... *This is not a request Nonon, this is an order. Your punishment for getting too close to the sun. I know that you are versed in some medical care, including how to draw blood. It is convenient that you were the one that stumbled into our midst.*"

"Why do you need me for this? What are you doing now?"

"I mentioned she won't harm me at all cost? *I meant it. She refuses to jab me with the hypodermic, refuses to run the collection vials, and vehemently refuses to bypass the whole damned procedure and simply drink from the fount as it were. No matter how preferable that would be for me. So I've been drawing it from myself as time allows, preparing wine to mask anti-coagulant, and generally keeping this operation going. I am aware how poor of a decision that is. There was simply no other option.*"

"You prep the site, and the needle, stick it into the vein and let your blood pressure do the rest how bad could you be?"

"...The last drawing took numerous tries... *While my aim slowly improves, there are still many holes... I know how to cut veins, not so much pierce them. We could be doing things so much simpler Ryuko, just trust yourself for once. I can take it.*"

"We tried that when we had to Nee-San, *things almost went to shit...*"

"But they didn't and I was fine after a short amount of time. I still maintain direct contact as the best method at our disposal."

"Why in the hell would you want vampirella biting you over a sorta-safe clean medical procedure!?"

"Numerous reasons. She does not miss, *period*. We are close enough in genetics that she can remotely repair surface damage to my flesh with her fibers. From papercuts, to cooking mishaps, to a pair of holes in my carotids that matches her canines... Leaves no traces for anyone to find such as yourself, though it is not a pain-free process. No worrying about sterilization, her saliva is anti-microbial. Probably to avoid killing potential long term nourishment sources with disease. And It has been a significantly complicated process to buy bulk hypodermics without involving anyone else... Or drawing unwanted attention from the authorities."

"...Why not enlist the nerd brigade?"

"While loyal they store information out of their own heads. There

are still many who do not trust us, my name specifically. I fear the uprising that would occur should this leak and the world potentially learn another Kiryuin is harboring another hive of Life fibers. Supposedly the only reason radical elements have not made attempts to end my life already are because I married a woman. Neither of us should have an heir in such an arrangement, thus ending the Kiryuin lineage without direct action on their part. *Little do they know mine wife will probably outlive most countries let alone humanity, but that's probably for the best they don't.*"

"...*Fuck it...* So you don't accidentally off yourself prematurely, I'll fucking do it. *I'll help you do something stupid for the greater good once again.*"

"*That is actually a great relief to hear. Words cannot express my gratitude Nonon.*"

"Satsuki?"

"*Hmm?*"

"This is not a rabbit hole, *this is a god-damned mine shaft with an armed nuclear bomb at the bottom.*"

"Better armed than *detonating.*"

Chapter End Notes

I've rewritten this chapter something like 7 times. All 14 pages of it. Guarantee somethings wrong somewhere. Sorry for the appalling french and mixed English/Scottish. I don't actually know how you write singing... I tried.

Section two is roughly outlined, will start when I can write it.

Interlude, In a song

Chapter Summary

"Ready for bed?"

"..."

"Imouto?"

"Y-Yeah, I'll be right there."

"...*Are you well?*"

"Yeah it's just stupid shit, don't worry."

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

"Well, I know it's kinda late.

I hope I didn't wake you.

But what I gotta say can't wait,

I know you'd understand..."

To the normal observer the small square digital clock on Satsuki's nightstand was a simple, supposedly silent, device that existed to confirm the woman's internal time-keeping was still functioning at peak efficiency every morning. For the hyper aware second denizen of their most private sanctum the small electronic tick when current buzzed past the internal noise-making mechanism once every second was an excruciatingly painful reminder of the one opponent she was unable to force into submission. But she was going to put up one hell of a fight for every *nanosecond* of ground, no matter what.

"Every time I tired to tell you,

*The words just came out wrong,
So I'll have to say I l-love you in a song...
Yeah, I know it's kinda strange.
Every time I'm near you,
I just run out of things to say.
I know you'd understand."*

In the period of time before the sun rose and the moon retired on the more stressful days Ryuko would lie awake, sleep was a frivolous thing she didn't need much of anyway. She would still fall asleep with Nee-san in her arms near midnight, but wake up around four and only drift off into a nap ten minutes before six that typically ends shortly after when Satsuki wakes her *lazy butt up trying to sleep in everyday*. In this space she forced her senses to hyper awareness. Influx of information forcing her perception of time to pass blessedly-agonizingly slow.

*"Every time I tired to tell you,
The words just came out wrong,
So I'll have to say I love you in a song...
Every time the time was right,
All the words just came out wrong,
So I'll have to say I love you in a song..."*

Soft unblemished skin had slowly been healed of it's war scars with some effort. Now simply caressed by red lines permanently etching the sensations into her mind, surface thumping with vibrant life from pulsating blood beneath. Callused hands from years of sword forms capping arms reassuringly wrapped around torso beneath. Soft breath ever so slightly pushing her bare back upwards into the red embrace, tickling the skin of neck it blew across.

*"Yeah, I know it's kinda late.
Hope I didn't wake you,
But there's something I just gotta say.*

I know you'd understand..."

Her words would go unheard into these mornings. Quiet but deep voice cascading down the open hallways. Bouncing back from curtained windows failing to stop the first rays of blue light creeping along the floor. Vibrating vocal chords faltering as the sleeping form gave her a subconscious squeeze and nuzzle.

"E-Every time I tried to tell you,

The words just come out wrong,

So I'll have to say I love you... in a song..... Nee-san."

When the first rays of proper sunshine reached the windowsill, nerves pushed to their limit were relaxed. The buzzing tick of seconds returning from their perceived hour long intervals. Geared eyes closing to settle her mind into temporary low level operation after leaving a kiss on black hair upon her shoulder.

Unseen smile into the crook of her neck upturned slightly when her heart rate finally started to drop. One small kiss on the side of her neck in return for the lovely serenade she had given shooting it back up to a surprised roar. One it's recipient was evidently never *actually* supposed to hear, but cherished above all else all the same.

"N-Nee-!!"

"Shhhh, It was lovely but it's five forty love... we don't need to be up until six. I've told you many times, you are oh so very odd indeed, but that's why I love you. Please stay as we are, for me?"

"...W-When-"

"Fufufu, your voice peaked a bit in the first stanza. From the bottom of my heart, I love you too Imouto~."

Ryuko wasn't the only one who knew how to fake the traits of slumber for personal benefit.

Chapter End Notes

Do I have my shit fixed?

Sadly no.

Have I been writing on a borrowed machine?

Yes. Now what I *was* writing was supposed to be a short stand alone project while this story's material sits on a recovery drive waiting for transfer to a repaired pc.

Unfortunately I grossly underestimated how long it would take and gave up on making it a "short project" after passing 27k words with no where close to an end in sight.

So that's a thing for the future that's like a quarter to a third done. Later project. More Sisters, *very* loose morals, MUCH more angst.

Still wanted to put out something though, so have a small not-entirely-plot-relevant chapter.

Also wanted to ask from anyone that cares if touching somewhat serious stuff would be too jarring. I salvaged four of the chapters of the upcoming stuff, but on the fence about the end direction.

For example it currently involves a suicide bombing(s) and people getting shot... Thoughts?

Jim Croce - I'll Have To Say I Love You In A Song

Bath in blue

Chapter Summary

One step to the door. Might click when it closes. Other way?

Would need to jump the bed. Window's too noisy, needs to be oiled. Door it is.

Now to just carefully re-spool myself off of Sats... W-Was that a moan? S-Someones havin a good dream, fuck me she is gonna be in the mood today isn't she...

S-Sorry Nee-san just gonna have to wait.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Satsuki, as Ryuko had learned, was an extremely light sleeper. Ever so gently untangling her Fiber lines from the other woman without waking her was difficult. But it was not impossible. Free of sleeping form Ryuko carefully placed a red wrapped foot down on the floor before glancing back. Pang of guilt pushed down while shoving off noiselessly in her already chosen direction of escape.

While still technically not free flying like she had been asked, there had been some significant bending of her promise to ease this pre-sunrise *flight* from the property. Figuring out how to manipulate her threads to subjugate gravity itself to her will had been a challenge, but *totes worth* the effort. Just enough localized distortion to soundlessly push off the floor and glide a couple meters forward with each step. Tip-toed step to step floating her along. Thankfully not enough power in use to draw either the attention of *physics nerds* or *captain nipples* and his *Fiber-gps-beeping-piece-of-shit-get-that-out-of-my-face-thing*.

Still silent Ryuko prepared for the trip. Delving into her closet for disposable clothes, grabbing one of several tagged bags stashed away in the back, and some paper to leave a note in the kitchen. Scribbled message telling Sats not to worry and she would be back before bed if not back before six AM.

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Sun still somewhere below the horizon she pulled up at her

destination nestled in a grove of trees outside the city. Grumbling to herself she pulled the bag holding a portion of overpriced rocks from her car's passenger seat and headed for a covered area on the compound's grounds. Finding man in charge she dropped her sack onto the dirt floor in front of him. Material delivery for her special order, in full, as promised. Face frowning to return the seventy or so year old metal worker's own scowl. Beard rustling as he spoke.

"So the Demon of Lace actually returns."

"Old man, it's five in the fuckin morning. Why the fuck are we doing this at *five!*?"

"Because you're an impatient trollop that wanted some rather unique work. Quit whining before I change my mind on letting a *demon* have the fruit of my shop and forge."

He was a complete *old-timey hardass* that was driving her up a wall. But she needed his help to make what she wanted. "*For the last fuckin time* It's just money, I'm not a demon, and I will not be taking your *soul!*"

Cracking his neck he scoffed. "I don't care to know your lies. No mortal of this earth can ruin an anvil by hand. I'm not doing this for your tainted paper, I'm doing this so, whatever being from the other side you are, you move on. Departing without leaving a curse upon my house! I've seen the articles in my daily paper. Your corrupting of this nation's youth with raw sex appeal while hanging off the arm of the angry-faced spawn of the *Evil in white* before her. I will not be fooled!"

Nostrils flared as she spit to her right. Punching a hole through the brown hard packed earth. "Drag the wife into this and see what happens asshole. *I fuckin dare you.*"

"Y-You tricked that man-bitch into actually selling you her life? And it was allowed!? You foul temptress!"

Now pissed she grabbed him by the front of his overalls and lifted his panicking feet off the ground. Voice slipping into edged fibrous slur as her tongue sharpened to match his insults. "*Fuckin fine! You want to play this sshit thiss hard you're five ssecondsss from an early, bloody, grave meat-ssack! Clocksss ticking~! Whatss it gonna be?*"

"Nooo! I need more time!"

"*Then I ssuggesst we get to work already blacksssmith-basstard.*"

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Waking up in an usually cold bed alone had *in fact* been a *significant* dampen on Satsuki's mood for the day. The loving ironhold she always woke up to had fast become her number one request every night from unusual missus. More unusually Red department had actually been informed that their head wouldn't be in that day and had workloads *already* organized accordingly. Unfortunately for the rest of the companies upper levels, they had not been so lucky. For the first half of the work day Satsuki had to stalk from floor to floor ensuring everything was moving along. Perpetual frown and cold demeanor following her.

The otherwise completely normal day had left the young CEO with nothing more to do than attempt rationalizing events through abnormally uneventful lunch. Actually catching herself staring at the back of her nameplate, still sitting in it's rightful spot until she reached forward to knock it over to the left.

Ryuko is her own woman. If she has somewhere to be and wished not to involve me with the details whatsoever, so be it... Within reason. Even if that includes ditching a work day... For some purpose... Houka could find her if need be... Probably.

As if summoned from her worry a knock on the door broke her out of her thoughts. Inumuta had come to her office with some urgency in his voice, apologized for the intrusion, and got right down to business.

"Ma'am I've been quietly interrogating anyone I could grab from her department and I can't come up with a location or goal for our missing executive. All I can gather was they assumed this had been a normal event. *Please* tell me at least you know where she is?"

Hands folded in her lap Satsuki shook her head. "Unfortunately, no. Still not even sure how she managed to vanish, or *when* for that matter."

"Should we treat this as the start of a worst case scenario and sound the alarms?"

"Houka we will not irrationally jump to conclusions when it comes to scrambling a small army in the middle of Tokyo. The last thing this company needs is *more* scrutiny. That probably hasn't stopped certain *others* from going into an elevated state of readiness I assume?"

"Mister Kinagase *has* been breathing down my neck for the better part of this morning."

"Has the sensor net detected our *immanent* doom?"

"In his own words, *not yet*."

"Then we continue as normal. No need to scramble resources every-time she ducks out for... *reasons.*"

"Ma'am?"

Rotating her chair around she looked out over the city. Frowning at the bustling traffic far below stretching to the horizon as it still held no sign of a particular little red car. "Is there any way to tell where she is *exactly*? What she's doing? *Who she's with?*"

"Does she have her phone on her?"

"As usual when it matters, *no*. Still plugged in and sitting on a table at home. *Half a mind to sit her down and shove the damn thing into her every morning so she won't forget it.*"

"Uhhh... *M-Ma'am?*"

"*What- Oh... Oh gods not like that. A-Apologies...* I meant the storage space she uses inside her self. Continue."

"*Right.* Then I can't without exercising some less than legal control over other virtual networks."

"She took her car, planted any tracers on it?"

"I would never bug *,um,* current Kiryuin property Lady Satsuki."

"*Houka don't insult me.*"

"I-I'll admit I've tried. In both cases the devices were destroyed without mercy and returned to me as ultra-fine powder poured out into my coffee. The second time she threw in a very colorful warning not to tamper with *her baby*. Thought best not to hit a third strike. Orders?"

"I'll-... I'll put out the call if she's still missing by tomorrow morning."

"You don't sound quite ready to do that."

"No one should have to to start a *military-manhunt* for their *missus.*"

"People don't typically marry *weapons of mass destruction, Ma'am.*"

"It's not her fault she can wreck a mountain in a single punch. Level an island in seconds. *And she has a name, not a munitions designation Houka.*"

"I meant no disrespect, merely stating the facts. I'm sure she

will turn up eventually."

"Universe so help me if she doesn't."

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Ryuko had in fact returned as her scrawled note had promised a little after six in the evening. Setting half finished novel down when the closet door to the backyard stirred to life Satsuki walked over to let her in, interest in what she had gotten up to increasing after getting one look at her.

"Welcome home Imouto. Could you please explain why you look like you intervened on a fight between a cement pallet and a charcoal bag? *You have no idea how much of a relief it is to see you.*"

Her tired face was smeared with dust in splotches. Eyes slightly narrowed but mouth otherwise still breaking into a smirk. Clothes full of sweat and various shades of gray dust all over. Fabric wrapped package in her hands pristine in comparison.

"Cause I was being *frustratingly productive* today Eyebrows. *Emphasis on frustratin.*"

"I take it you're referring to that burgeoning bundle of burlap in thy grasp?"

"Yeah. I'll show you after I clean this shit off. *An maybe work out some of that frustration...*"

Trying to cross the threshold her path was blocked by an arm. Protests cut off when her own gut gurgled to life rather loudly.

"Call it a hunch, but I'm going to assume you have not eaten in some time?"

"Nope! *Got no breaks all fuckin day.*"

"Considering your internals it's not wise to let happen, we will just have to rectify that first. Dump the mess you're wearing onto the tile here, wash your hands *and face* in the half bath off the dining room, and come to the breakfast table."

"Isn't it a lil late fer breakfast?"

"Aren't you a little in trouble for ditching me without so much as a word on a workday~?"

"I c-can explain. It was work related stuff, promise! *Mostly.*"

"Then I look forward to the verbal gymnastics explaining how this will improve your professional position."

"Can't we just make it *s-sexual* gymnastics and call it even?"

"*Ryuko*."

"I'm goin!"

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Unwilling to dirty the dining room Satsuki put together a simple supper and plated it in the little breakfast nook taking a corner of their kitchen. Bright curtain closed over a window that overlooked the darkened yard beside them. Preparing herself a fresh cup of tea Satsuki sat across from practically naked woman as she inhaled her provided meal with tears in her eyes.

Aside from more mundane conversation, questions to her whereabouts and state had been met with silence through dinner. Mouth stuffed when confronted. Promise given to *definitely* answer them after cleaning up properly. Doubtful but willing to avoid making a rash decision Satsuki allowed her to go and went back to her reading on the living room sofa. On the wall nearby a clock ticked as she waited, and waited, *and waited*.

Has she fallen asleep up there? Or is she avoiding me?

With a need to bathe as well, elder Kiryuin placed bookmark to pick up later where she left off for the night and headed for master bedroom to seek her answers.

She has been staying in there longer and longer. While it's doing much for her appearance really starting to miss her more utilitarian use of the shower. "Imouto?"

Poking head into the room after calling from the hall she found it mostly unlit with a trail of sweaty undergarments haphazardly leading to the lone shaft of illumination cutting across the room. Soft yellow light cast around bathroom door that was as usual left open. Just wide enough to permit the extremely rare, but not unheard of, curious blushing gaze upon Ryuko's skin as she scrubbed and rubbed. Today though curious eyes could not discern anything moving beyond the haze.

Having otherwise received no response the answers she sought would require direct engagement so it would seem. Ignoring pang of discomfort at the back of her mind from unfortunately familiar air, she knocked before entering smaller space.

"Ryuko? I have it on good judgment that you are still in here. And don't pretend you're deaf, I know you can hear me from the other

end of the property when I call for you."

Nothing but a faucet drip answered.

Reaching out to her right she flicked on wall switch for fans to start clearing excess steam. Air no longer suffocatingly wet she strolled in further to study the recently installed larger ceramic pool taking up the far wall. Almost imperceptible signs of movement beneath steamy blue suds by some occupant confirming her suspicions on Ryuko's current location at least.

"I know you're down there Imouto. I don't know what you're planning, but would you be so kind as to surface for me?"

Summoned from the deep a red *periscope* facsimile rose out of the foam to pan back and forth from the fixtures far end. *Target* evidently sighted it sank back below the *soapy deep*. Followed shortly by a yellow scrubbing sponge bursting from the water with an arcing trajectory aimed at her torso.

Foam block might have been moving at unusually high speed for a bath aid, but a sponge was still a sponge. Standing solid Satsuki simply plucked it from the air in front of her before impact. However this missile had a stage two. Payload of warm bath water still hit it's mark after she squeezed it in flight. Pastel pressed shirt going translucent much to her consternation. Tossing block aside fingers pinched material plastered to her skin away from royal blue now visible beneath.

"*Mmmhmm... Mine warrior* has a functioning knowledge of ballistic physics at least. Okay *Red October*, will running silent save you from a counter battery?"

After receiving more silence she impressed a plastic bucket nearby into service before turning on her heel to march back down to the kitchen. Returning after a few minutes she attempted diplomacy again.

"*Captain Ramius*, this is the Kiryuin air-force. Lay down your *vines* and surface to surrender before we are forced to return fire immediately."

While water stilled it's subtle motions, still nothing surfaced.

Likely attempting to figure what she is facing. Points for thinking, but the distraction had no follow-up. Sloppy? Soapy. "Nothing? Not even to witness bath-battered beloved bosom~? Don't say I didn't warn you dear."

To insure maximum field coverage she gripped the now cold plastic bucket and chucked it's load of ice cubes up and over the tub. Frozen rain succumbing to gravity pelted the hot liquid surface with plunks and sizzles. Not even seconds later waters churned from underneath as chilled swaths sank down to startle one

unprepared *submariner* before she could adapt.

"Will you finally surface? Preferably before I need to get more *creative* with my munitions?"

Wild black and fiber-red hair not succumbing to such a *trivial* force as water weight maintained it's general shape as it rose out of the foam. Blue gears giving a hurt stare up at Satsuki, before flicking down and widening at her *tactical strike's* outcome.

"Welcome back from *Atlantis* Imouto, I was wondering what was taking so long up here. *Hmm? Admiring the view of mountainous shore~?*"

After nodding Ryuko closed her eyes and lightly swayed from side to side in the tub.

"I don't suppose you could be so kind as to articulate thy thoughts in a manner mine mind can more readily comprehend without partaking in generalized assumptions?"

Pushing up with her hands Ryuko rose her upper body out of the water to rest against the far wall in a sitting position. Pensive expression downcast for a minute before glancing back up to stare at wet mounds. Ever present necklace visible through the foam clinging to her chest.

"You ever feel, *like*, cold? Not freezing cold or even shivering cold but just that somewhat *uncomfortable-but-your-body-doesn't-give-a-shit-about-it-cold*? And then... And then like its a cloudy day right, but the sun breaks through while yer just sittin on a roof. An the wind stops for that *one second* and in that second a warm feelin blankets ya. Goosebumps all over an yer just *comfortable*? If I had to say what it's like... It'd be like that. A lot stronger, but *that*."

"The feeling of relaxed muscles? Or I suppose it's actually a combination of that and relaxing fibers as well... Must be something significant seeing how you got rather lost in it this time *hmm~?*"

"Eh?"

"You have been in here for a little over *two hours*, Imouto."

Slightly shocked she blinked instead of even trying to argue or justify herself.

"Now normally I would think cooling water would tip someone off. Yet here we are in the eye of a veritable sauna. Having not heard the water run for a while how is this soup you've been stewing in still steaming hot?"

Ryuko's nose wrinkled as a pair of steam spouts blasted downwards like days gone past. Parting the foam off her chest in the process.

"Temperature control. Just gotta get the ole furnace cookin, *fresh fuel helps...*"

With a slight chuckle arms were distractedly crossed under wet shit. "*Mmm*. Then that would make any smaller body of water you wished into a bath that never cools? The supposed ultimate in letting go of the days stresses..."

"I guess? It's nice as fuck. *T-Too nice maybe.*"

She stood there for another minute. Chewing her lower lip while staring at bathwater full of diluted additive. Near whisper barely louder than the fans.

"*But would you be willing?*"

"Sats?"

"I still need to bathe. Normally this would involve a quick shower alone, but today... Today may I be so bold as to join you my dear? *In there?*"

"*Uhhh*, that is entirely on you and what you're willing to do. Before you cannonball into the pool though this shit *is* loaded with the usual right now."

Ryuko's heat flushed upper body looked inviting enough. Face full of genuine concern. Touch no doubt flooded with nothing but care. Satsuki's thoughts were pulling hard toward letting a days worth of loneliness melt into that grasp. Other feelings be damned.

Kiryuin Satsuki does not back down. Especially to be with Imouto.

Her mind was made up. Undoing pant's zipper she let them drop to wet tile floor. Clinging shirt unbuttoned and peeled off to be cast into now empty ice bucket beside her. First hesitation as hand neared clasp on her back. Ryuko springing upward with a slosh to put her hands out.

"N-Nee-san this is full of- I'll get out- *I'll drain it*, rinse off the residue, and draw another bath *then* get out if you wanna try a bath."

"No. All you have to do is keep that pleasant-posterior right where it is my dear. I'll... I-..."

"*Fuck...* Look, if you can't bring yerself to strip j-just step in wearing *t-the set?*"

Surprisingly those last words had almost been physically painful to say. The vast majority of her work was cold water only, especially those made to support the most valuable flesh on earth. No expense was ever spared for *her*, no production too complicated. For them a hot bath was practically a death sentence.

"But it's a bath?"

"It's a bath-tub. No one said you had to jump in nude if ya can't handle it."

"I can *handle* anything thrown at me Ryuko. *Including you.*"

"*Damnit Eyebrows*, this is uncomfortable shit I'm just sayin we can make it slightly less uncomfortable and work from there. Like a pool. *Plans and shit yeah?*"

"I assure you there is a plan in motion... *But I'm open to suggestions.* Won't this ruin your hard work though? You're rather *irrationally defensive* about some of these and their treatment."

"I pretty much spend most days makin em already, and I'd make as many as ya ever need. *T-There are worse ways to die than being wrapped around yer ass.* It's for a good cause."

Conceding she bent over to pull off black socks one at a time, water filled bra adding momentum to breasts as she bobbed up and down. Action enough to garner a blush from her audience that made her stop to take in the view as bath water grew into a bright purple shade from vines still hanging downward into tub.

"I take it this is turning you on right now? *Or is that a stupid question~?*"

"W-Wet lingerie... Skin... *And yer... w-well...*"

"*Mmmm~.* High praise from the head seamstress."

Garnering more intense lights from stimulated fiber nerves, Satsuki chuckled while continuing. Taking a steadying breath she stepped over the tiled side of the tub and into knee high liquid with some help. Red lines re-positioning on the floor to give her some room. Mindful of the temperature she lowered slowly into the mix, halting with another momentary hesitation over potentially ruining silk garments. Looking back up she got a reluctant nod, *it's okay Nee-san.* Sinking down to shoulder height she sat against tub's wall and sighed as fabric swelled against her. Ryuko sitting back down herself directly across.

"*Sooo... uh,* not to ruin whatever *the fuck* kinda mood we got goin on here but how's yer vag doin right about now?"

"To be blunt it's been better. Estimate twenty to thirty minutes at most before I develop a very unfortunate rash."

"You could step out now and I'll--"

"That will not be necessary. I've already committed this far, and we do things all the way. There is soap somewhere I take it?"

Goosebumps raised as *serpents* snaked around the tubs bottom for a second, slight involuntary jump in response to being touched near her foot unexpectedly. Cursing herself inwardly when an attempted apology came from Ryuko.

"Shit sorr--"

"Stop. Please don't retreat."

Fishing beneath the surface her hands eventually found the end of a line. Gingerly grasping it to tug the coil into her lap and stroke like a cat. Fingers running along red surface filled with pleasant sensations. Looking up she noted Ryuko was trying extremely hard to cover her mouth with both hands. Mixture of feelings painted on her blushing face met with a smile.

"It's alright Imouto. It's you. It's always alright. It was just a slight surprise. Continue."

"N-N-Nee-san... T-That's--"

"Shhh... Relax."

Fiber bundle squirmed beneath her touch before settling. Doing as asked Ryuko sank down to her shoulders into the foam, Fiberous hair lit up with a tornado of emotions. Attempting to refocus on her task another line eventually found the soap. Coming up next to Satsuki it shuddered when a sound rang out from her throat. Sinking lower into the foam in embarrassment.

"Ryuko was-... Was that a purr~?"

Bar finally dropped into her hand before slinking back away. With limited time in mind Satsuki nudged fibers from her lap to start lathering up as best one can in garments.

"Fufufu, Thank you~. You know Iori is supremely jealous of these. Seemingly endless uses."

"E-Everything from yard work to playin with myself."

Even after months of *activity* some rather rogue thoughts and memories still brought a blushing smile from Satsuki.

"I m-meant games!"

"Oh really now? So sure about that~?"

"F-Fuckin fine, y-yes, they-... they make nice f-fuck toys when we ruin the sheets."

"Nice~? My dear don't sell yourself short. *Thy vine's touch has melted mine heart and torn loins asunder in ecstasy under many different moons.* In the roughly four years I knew of you I went from asexual to *fantasizing* at inappropriate moments."

"Y-Your wet dreams are about being stuffed silly?"

"I do not have wet dreams Imouto. I take offense to that, I am in control of myself at all times."

"Nee-san you were *soaked* this morning. If I hadn't *disengaged* you were about *this close* to grindin yourself off on me in your sleep. N-Not that I mind! If ya ever wanna... y-you know... d-dry hump me a little fer yer own sake... f-feel free to g-go ahead."

"I-... Um... I'll keep that in consideration... I suppose."

Finishing her lather Satsuki's own face was firmly going pink in the pause of conversation.

"B-Back to the topic from earlier, might I finally be informed as to why you snuck out? Abandoned thy post? It was rather dull today without your air of *whimsy*."

"I Needed some things made, had to find someone willing to make them. Both were a pain in the ass."

"Why?"

"Not many metal workers willing to deal with space rock."

"Why not just call up Gamagori? He seems rather keen to follow your every order to the letter nowadays."

"The big lug would have passed out after I told him what I needed."

"Which was?"

"Underwear parts."

"From rocks? Why *meteorites* of all things?"

"The eye loops and shit. Clasps, rings, you know? Didn't start with the idea though. P-Promise not to laugh?"

Replacing soap in it's dish Satsuki sunk down to all fours so she

could crawl across the tub and sit next to Ryuko.

"Of course."

"Y-You know how I feel shit right? *Fibers?*"

"Mmmhmm?"

"I wanted to know firsthand if *She* had lied. If there were really more fibers *out there*. Space rocks come from other groups of space rocks, right? If fibers destroy planets..."

"Then the debris of said planets would either carry the traces of, or fibers themselves?"

"Yeah."

"Your findings?"

"Fat load of nothin so far. I know, it's completely stupid to think that the little pieces would ever be useful to find anythin."

"Good heavens no, *it's brilliant!*"

"Eh? O-Oi!"

Shifting over once again She maneuvered to sit in Ryuko's naked lap. Holding chin to prevent blushing face from turning away.

"Plans have been drawn for some time to launch probes out to spy on the void around us. To scan extraterrestrial material *itself* for the evidence of such is a way to begin the search with meaningful results, promote utilization of existing resources, stop personnel sitting idle, and keeps Mr. Mikisugi occupied thus keeping him from stripping on the property! Ryuko that's *Genius!* When did you come up with this!?"

"While drinking...Y-You?"

Forgetting most everything in her excitement she threw arms around Ryuko's neck to hug head of wild hair.

"I *knew* that those discussions would amount to something of substance! I'll call Inumuta later to see if we can get people into various publicly collections as soon as possible."

"N-Not that I m-mind, b-but yer uh..."

"Hmm?... O-Oh!"

Eyes shot open upon realizing she had been crushing burning red face into her chest. Releasing Ryuko she quickly dropped back to

her rear in the water. Backing up a ways to create some space. Lip biting nervousness returning as Ryuko's head flopped back onto the tile behind, face flushed beyond belief. Mouth drooling.

"S-Sorry! Are you alright?"

"I-I'm aight... v-very, very, very alright..."

"A-Are you actually fine or-"

"Fine? Fine!? S-Sats I w-would love n-nothin more than to *live* in there... B-Better question, how are *you*?"

"Me!?"

"Well ya did just initiate *contact*."

Taking stock of events and their corresponding neurological responses, she came to a singular conclusion. Ever willing to push boundaries she stood up and turned around. Ryuko's shoulders slumping when she thought the *experiment* had failed.

"I'm sorry for bringin it up."

"Don't be. Touching you is always fine... *And I will do as I wish~.*"

Confused, Ryuko watched as a soaking wet upper garment was shed and tossed over into the sink across the room. Turning around Satsuki took two steps to cross porcelain floor, knelt down to straddle underwater legs, and pressed Ryuko to the wall by her shoulders.

"Forgive me for not kissing thy face, as inviting as your flustered look is we are still trying to avoid a call with poison control. *However that does not mean I can't indulge thee for at least a little while more~.*"

"E-Eh!?"

Taking hold of Ryuko's stuttering head on both sides she planted face firmly between breasts once again. Content to bask in the red light overpowering the ceiling bulbs. Body below eventually building the courage to hug her back. Contact points growing ever warmer to the touch as Ryuko's less wholesome feelings bled across. Until an unfamiliar burning sensation began to form.

"I-Imouto~."

With her mouth pressed to the soapy flesh Ryuko couldn't give much more than muffled noises.

"...Mmpphh?"

"*Fufufufu*. You hair tickles when wet... *Mmmm*, spoiling you is *intoxicating* you know that? If only I could indulge you further... Alas as wonderful as this is I speak because we might have a problem."

"*Mmph?*"

"Things are starting to sting a little bit down low."

Separating from the embrace Ryuko grimaced at the rash starting to form.

"N-Nice while it lasted... I tried to tell you this shit was a bad idea. Yer not- You're *human* Sats."

"And so are you! *You are just a little bit different from the normal dainty denizens of our demographic.*"

"Death row inmates?"

"No... I was going for corporate women. I've ordered despicable things, but why on earth would you be--"

"A-Aren't you in pain right now?"

"A fair bit of discomfort. *I'm not dropping this Ryuko.*"

"Yeah yeah, *later*. Grab on I'll help rinse you off before you look like steamed crab."

"*Mmm...*"

After removing the drain plug vines went to work around them as the duo stood up. Plastic shower stool dragged to it's place under a removable shower-head, supporting Nee-san as she shuffled out and over to it, destroying panties imbued with bath solution, and grabbing both available heads to begin dousing her in water.

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Short while later found them sitting across from each other on their bed. To let her skin cool off from it's harsh treatment Satsuki had loosely wrapped herself in a robe, and at her instance Ryuko eventually donned *herself* instead of sitting nude. Between them on a towel was today's *progress towards something or other*.

"So Imouto, *what hath mine wife done today instead of furiously fondling my welcoming womanhood?* And why so much secrecy?"

Reaching forward Ryuko undid twine knots holding the bundle together to reveal multiple smaller ones, reaching for a narrow brown form she tossed it over. Deftly caught shape inside was immediately familiar enough to elicit a questioning eyebrow. Gestured to open it Satsuki carefully unwound the rough fabric until catching sight of what lay inside. Held up in both hands with a gasp.

"Woulda ruined the surprise. So I know you *put your sword away* and all that jazz, but there is more than one kind of blade... *S-So I thought you should have one.*"

In her grasp was a wakizashi that looked like it came from a land of magic. From end to end the *specifically reverse-bladed* short sword was encased in crystal furniture. Clear material only broken by metal fittings that matched the swirling silver make up of the forged blade within, white ito wrapping it's clear handle.

"I couldn't get anythin really special for the wrap. I think it came out good enough though..."

Now holding a blade Satsuki immediately switched to a proper kneeling position on the sheets before inspecting. Equal parts dumbfounded that such an item exists, and captivated by it.

"May I?"

"It's yours Eyebrows, do whatever."

Grey eyes shot up to try and pry into blue for answers, Ryuko was already looking away and scratching her cheek though. With no other objection she smoothly drew the one handed weapon from it's translucent home before twisting it to catch the light, which only brought even *more* questions as she noted the grain was filled with tiny multi-colored flecks of other metals throughout.

"What in the world is this and where did it come from?"

Glancing past it back to Ryuko for answers, all she got was a finger pointed up.

"Space rocks and smiths for the day, I see."

"Yup. One sword to defend the peace, all materials except the handle wrap came from *out there*. I figured you gave me a space ring, *I'm half space-bitch*... T-Then why not go for a space sword. Everything was melted down and forged from the more mundane rocks. Figured I'd use them for more than decoration after picking out the crazier shit for the other pieces."

"Good gods above a sword forged from the heaven's themselves. How?"

"Oh-hooo, that was the hard part. I went to at least twenty smiths before I found one that would even think about doin this from *really shitty rock*. And the old fuck that finally *did* made me help to prove I was *deservin such a weapon*. Took all day to get everything done, but there it is."

"It's beautiful."

"F-Fitting fer you t-then..."

"Mmmm~. It is a most wonderful totem of your appreciation. Thank you, Imouto. Though I'm not sure if I could do anything more than mount it somewhere nice."

"Not gonna open carry weapons at work? *I'm shocked*."

"Hmm, carry at work? No. Place of honor over the fireplace downstairs? Perhaps. Might bring it out for fashion shows and special occasions. Having such a thing on me at all times normally could send the wrong message about our objectives to those who do not know the traditions behind this style of blade. *It's also a bit big to dangle from my neck~*."

Re-sheathing it she placed it gently back in the larger bundle before grabbing a smaller one and giving it a feel. Noting the metallic clinking noises from within. Prompted with another questioning eyebrow Ryuko explained.

"That one's sliders I think."

Taking it she opened the top to confirm, turning it over to show Satsuki the cut metal parts. Surfaces filled with colorful geometric patterns courtesy of their unusual source material.

"Now these shits took *forever*. Had to cut each piece individually and then one by one rub acid on them to bring out the patterns."

"Precious metals not good enough for your art?"

"Nee-san I'm literally putting my name on things that will cradle tits for extended periods of time. They deserve only the best that I can possibly get."

Taking the bundles and re-wrapping them Satsuki placed them one by one on Ryuko's otherwise bare nightstand. Robe pulled open she threw herself forward to grab Fiber bra straps. Pulling Ryuko down with her as she tilted back again until pinned to the bedding. Slight readjustments to press foreheads together she spoke softly but firmly.

"*Imouto~*, there is only *one* pair of breasts thou shalt attempt to *cradle*. If I hear one, *one*, complaint of inappropriate touching of a client I will be *extremely cross*."

Tilting mouth forward Satsuki partook of confused lips above for a while. Only nudging Ryuko to back up for a second when her lungs burned for air.

"Mine Red Goddess, Thou hast lowered thyself to toil within the smithy's realm to realize thy wish for a fitting token of thy love. It hath been received joyfully, but I will say it a thousand times again that there is truly one gift thy person ever need bestow upon *my* person... *And again I iterate, me alone...*"

"*I w-wonder what that could be~.*"

"*Mmmm...* Under morrow's sun I had made some plans to capitalize on the time away from the office. However, in actuality limbs need not stir from precious slumber against thy ever more precious form."

"A day in of just *nothing*? No Sunday chore list?"

"Perhaps. I do believe with our little foray into *bath-bonding* a pair of selfless soldiers has been sacrificed for our benefit. If thou hast gathered a set of materials from Hephaestus forge their integrity should be put to the test in a fitting set of replacements methinks. The first production of an ultra-limited *out of this world collection~?*"

"*Heh*. You want more blue ones? How about something thin with navy flowers? *Real* thin. Might take a while and a lot of rechecking against yer skin."

"*That sounds like a lovingly-lewd excuse to leave me nude~.*"

"*T-That wasn't a no.*"

"*Mmmhmm~.*"

Red straps were tugged to bring her cocky smile down for another round. Breaking once again minutes later when she stopped a roaming hand from trying to start something a bit more involved.

"Now that we have a schedule can you please finally tell me how you went from an infant, to the woman I love?"

Flopping onto her back with a groan Ryuko made to get up. Hand still firmly grasping her bra prevented that.

"Thought I would forget?"

"Thought you wouldn't kill the mood."

"I'm sorry but a few rounds of *vigorous activity* are not in the cards tonight."

Crumpling once again to the mattress she was staring upwards. Gaze far beyond the ceiling.

"Why is this so important? I've told you the gist of it."

"I just want to know what events have shaped you as a person Ryuko. And don't give me that *plausible deniability* excuse, I would sooner help you hide a body in a deep grave out in the Gobi desert than give you up to the authorities."

"That's kinda specific..."

"I had a lot of time to think about how to dispose of a specific walking corpse."

"Fair. You're not gonna stop are you?"

"Have I ever?"

"Then get comfy Satsuki... *cause It's sure as hell not gonna be for long...*"

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Ryuko's *gruesomely detailed* tale had ended somewhere between three and four in the morning. Satsuki was not sure for certain, didn't get any sleep either way. With sunlight streaming in she was sitting on the edge of Ryuko's old bed in a state of complete undress. While the seamstress rummaged through their basement to find *the perfect* roll of material to use she sat holding a now cold cup of tea, waiting. She had only taken one sip. Mind relentlessly running over a single thought.

And after that, after ALL of that, she kept going. She had nothing, absolutely nothing. No one. I had a goal, an army, a bastion of elites! Friends. Even Soroi's tea... She was just a girl dropped off at the age of ten and forced to grow up in a very hostile world very much trying to kill her at every turn... And I did nothing but spit on her resolve and ridiculed her drive? Turned even MORE of the world against her... Yet she still smiles at me every morning...

"Found it!"

Hearing her coming back from downstairs the tea was drained in a gulp, saucer placed aside quickly. As a roll of fabric was deposited on the floor she stood up, went over, and crushed Ryuko into a hug. Fingers curling protectively into the woman's cut off t-shirt when confusion flowed through the physical connection.

"*Uh...* It's not like I left fer Vietnam er some shit for it."

"I could have helped you Ryuko."

"*Oh, psh, it's nothin.* Just have to reorganize the storage racks later, don't worry about it Sats. So a top and bottom right? Which one first?"

"About that, I've been giving it some thought... How about a full set instead, one of everything?"

Ryuko glanced back down to the roll, and matching blue spools of thread she had gathered earlier. Eyes full of thought, her own eyebrow raised.

"*Everything?* Shoulda said something earlier would need a couple other rolls of stuff and a shit ton more thread for that. Could also take all day too..."

"I can already say the end product would be worth it, and I would give you all the time you need to accomplish this. It would be time well spent."

"*Okaaay,* you never want the garters, gloves, and shit. What's up?"

"I just thought that when such hard to get materials are in play it should be something special. You never seem to mind spending time in such trappings even with your sensitive skin, so I assume it can be comfortable and it would be nice to have. An interesting change in my wardrobe for sure. If you're up for producing it that is."

"*Lettin me make it see-through, a whole proper set, and willing to wear it out and about!? Yer fuckin on Nee-san~!*"

Attempting to turn around and head back down for more bolts she was slowed by a hand still buried in the back of her shirt. Bare feet walking behind her.

"*Eh?*"

"Shall... we look together?"

"Sats it's just a little manual labor, I can grab a couple and come back up in a minute. It's nothing."

"I know you *can* do it alone, but so long as I am able you

shouldn't have to."

"What's with you today? Whatever, it's yer back. Come on, need to find a flashlight then."

"I though that was what I had you for~?"

"Ha. Ha."

"Mmm~. Thank you."

"We haven't even started yet?"

"It doesn't matter."

Chapter End Notes

Back in business, at least for a bit. Things are moving along but not yet ready so I can't promise the five / six more chapters just yet. I've more or less finished this one though, so no point sitting on it really.

Decided against using the serious stuff in this, wouldn't fit the tone so far. The odd remnant will be around depending on how the sections get done.

As always thank you for reading!

An artist's touch

Chapter Summary

He only saw her through spy camera lenses for the longest time, but even at distance he saw the signs. The rolled skirts, tied up shirts. His little girl was fast becoming a woman. One with certain unfortunate *tendencies* passed down from her mother. If they were the only things the poor girl inherited from *her* he would consider it a miracle. He had more immediate concerns to worry about though. A Kamui to build in case everything went wrong and she would get caught up in his war, *damaged*, yet again.

While in an active state fiber proximity to her vitals was to be kept at a minimum for safety, but the resting state gave him significantly more room to style it. He had spent a long time deliberating and hoped she would appreciate his round-about consent to her being... *free spirited* when the day came for her to don it if he didn't get the chance to speak with her at length.

Hoped that she could have a proper life someday.

Hoped that whomever she stuck with eventually would be able to actually keep up with the bottled lightning and hormones that might inevitably course within her.

She ended up in good hands.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

One late April morning continued as usual for the sleepy neighborhood they called home. Neighbors blissfully unaware of a heated standoff in the secluded Kiryuin household. It was a *particular time of the month* for one Fiber hybrid who had been somehow pushing herself *far too much* over the past few weeks. Seamstress's need to refill her reserves rearing it's head *brutally*. Per the usual Satsuki would seek to rectify this on schedule, but there was a series of things to do first. Including making doubly sure the eventual recipient could maintain a sound mind long enough to reach the point of relief.

"Dear."

That was occasionally difficult.

"Yesss~?"

Ryuko had already spent the morning so far in just an intricate pair of white and blue striped garments vaguely reminiscent of her old bargain bag underwear and there was no sign she would put anything more on. Arms spread wide held her up on a railing belonging to the house's main staircase. Half lidded eyes stared down over a canine showcasing smile at the pair of figures just below. Nee-san standing firm in her rules while certain pinkette behind her dutifully studied the floor.

"You *knew* what day it was Imouto. Find some pants to cover thy rear post haste."

"Considerin it'ss *today*, it'ss not like I'm gonna be in them fer long Nee-ssan~."

"I understand that you're deep in a *feeding mood* but rules are rules. Something, *now*."

Arms slipping off the banister hung limply beside Ryuko's head as her upper body collapsed over it with a whiny groan. Pushing herself up on two wooden supports she pulled her head up enough to shoot Eyebrows a pleading look and more hissing whines directly.

"Whyyy!?"

"Because mine wife will not prance about *completely* naked at all hours of the day."

"SSatsss *thiss iss unreasonnable!*"

"I've promised you personally upon my life I wouldn't be. Do you truly believe that wearing clothes is an affront to your person?"

"N-No it'ss *jusst...*

"Then what? I'm all ears."

"SSkirt?"

"Sure. Obscuring material down to the calf though. The dark red one that actually should be a spring item to be worn around now that you frequently had on around new years would suffice."

"Fuck no *that'ss-*"

"Speak like a person not a serpent."

"*That'sss... That's*, restrictive on the waist."

"Says the woman that has gone out in *corsets*."

"Those *hardly count* when it's *fer* looks not comfort at home. I'm sellin an-"

"And words have letters for a reason. Enunciate properly."

"Ughhh... *Sell-ING!* An *image* now. *Whatever happened to leaving my mouth alone?*"

"*Your tongue started treating mine like a vacation home.* I'm only being pedantic so you pick up better speech habits, I've left your *colorful* vocabulary otherwise alone. Your job is in design and management not advertising."

"It wasn't, until *you* put my ass in *front* of the cameras."

"It wasn't on purpose, and it still technically isn't your job, but you must admit you brought it on yourself. From a pure business standpoint sales increase when the brand can be connected to a person. A face. By name that was *me* which I don't have to remind you is not *ideal* for selling of *all things* clothes. But then the world's pundits and conspiracy theorists spotted *you*. And you have taken the mantle of being the face behind the brand *exceedingly* well. It would be idiotic not to capitalize on such a thing. I'm sorry... really. But you being... *your usual self*, around me was going to garner the public's attention and *imagination* no matter what by virtue of association. *You're too interesting for your own good~.*"

"Sats they just want to *imagine* me in *interesting-adult-situations.*"

"Not everyone. No matter what you believe people *do* actually admire you for your artistic abilities. *And they have since you were twelve...*"

"Oi!"

"Yes, yes, another matter for another time. While the root of advertising is in appealing fantasies, *and you must admit you're all kinds of that nowadays*, it's not a problem until those such individuals *smitten by your existence* attempt to act on them inappropriately. Which brings us back to you being currently a great deal of inappropriately dressed. I ask again what do you propose to remedy this?"

"B-Black pleat?"

"The knee length one they gave you at Rinne?"

"*Four.*"

"Ryuko that's a glorified garter-belt not a skirt. *Which is entirely not enough to be decent.*"

"Not when it sits low, *then it covers enough to be legal~!* Without that one it's ten or nothing."

"The objective is modesty not showcasing the colorful straps on your hips... *Ten black?* Surely you don't mean *that* one?"

"It was made to look normal and it's all *broken in for comfort*, come on!"

"With all that *breaking-in* haven't you *bleached* it by now?"

"Wash often and replace weak stitches regularly. Generally reinforced construction to hide the battery pockets... Eyebrows I can manage a mini like no one else and *you know it.*"

"...*Fine*, but no extra *inserts*. Shirt."

"You said rear!"

"*Shirt.*"

"Sports bra?"

"Are you referring to one dark-blue sacrificial sweat-rag you strap yourself into when spending extended periods of time tending to the machines and their leaking oily fluids? *The unlined one?*"

"*Maybe.*"

"*Must you- It's technically outer clothing go with it.* Close enough, wear it on top of what you already have."

"Bra over a bra? That's *literally* restrictive... *Constrictive.*"

"Just go put them on before I grab whatever I find and attempt to dress you myself. Which would inevitably harm one of us in a minor fashion, leading to a period of awkward interaction forced through intimate co-habitation before finally culminating in some form of jumbled apologies and moving forward together again. If we could just skip all the pointless bits between now and the hypothetical then *that would be great* or do you wish to drag this out like the ever inefficient *normal people?*"

With exaggerated motions Ryuko frowned but pushed off the railing to bounce up around the corner toward her room. Leaving duo on the ground floor with their task at hand starting with a trip into the basement.

"A-Am I missing something? *Numbers?*"

"Inches long Nonon. This way to the bottle racks."

"Uh... *Battery pockets?*"

Satsuki's foot almost missed the next step downward, briskly continuing in silence. Both inwardly cursing and thanking the buzz that chose that particular moment to start in her pocket. Slight concern though at the caller ID after pulling the device out.

"I unfortunately need to take this."

"Don't you have Sundays off which is why we're doing this nonsense today?"

"Yes, but I sadly can't ignore certain call sources including Inumuta's work number. It's either going to give me a headache or put a dent in the corporate coffers. *Conceivably both on occasion.* Could you please continue down, turn right, and grab the white plastic bin at ground level labeled *draw*. It will be near some counter space around the various stored *liquid solutions*. Light switch on the right wall at the bottom of the stairs."

"Plastic bin by the booze racks, got it."

Turning sideways she let Nonon pass down out of view and towards what they needed. Steeling herself she brought the device to her ear on it's sixth buzz in her hands to answer.

"Houka what's the emergency toda-"

"Uzu's stock account got hacked, his three percent of the company has been effectively stolen with fraudulent transactions."

She took a deep breath before asking him to explain.

"I've been scrambling to lock everything down but as far as I can gather they now belong to a certain heavy industry tycoon to the west."

"What does the Trade commission have to say? The police?"

"I've done everything I can within my legal ability as per our operating procedures, *including calling my dad for advice...*"

"I-... He actually picked up?"

"He's had time to think after the PD took him back on as a senior detective. I'm going to have dinner with him tonight, we're gonna talk finally. But that's my personal life. I promise it won't interfere with my work."

"Houka don't *you dare* burden yourself trying to come up with reassurances. He was *and probably still is* an actually decent man unfortunately sacrificed in the war. Do whatever *the hell* you need to, to reconnect and have actual regular... *family*. If you need

help in any capacity we're willing to offer it. For now, report?"

"*Right.* We have no evidence of illegal activity beyond Uzu's word which we know is good, but without anything concrete it would never hold up in court. It was an extremely clean and professional job. Nothing else was touched."

He wants a stake in our growth. Correction, has. So much for agreeing to stay out of the others business. "I'll be damned before that bastard puts his fingers anywhere near the same prefecture as the investment plans I've had lined up waiting for capital... I do believe we've given him too much leeway to operate and he thinks the clothing company is just another profit stream like all the other wasteful greed in Tokyo..."

"Ma'am?"

"I'm going to have to call you back later. When I do, I want a letter drafted and ready."

"Okay, what should it pertain to?"

"It was something we would have to settle eventually. *The Matoi estate.*"

Houka paused at that. It was not what he had anticipated at all.

"I can do that, but I don't see how that ties into the current situation."

She nodded to Nonon as the shorter woman walked back up with a plastic bin perched on top of her beret. Following along they both walked back upstairs while she explained and directed.

"*Up and to the left.* As the executor of Isshin Matoi's last Will and testament it is *his* legal responsibility to carry it out. Including turning over control of quite the number of technical patents and other intellectual property rights we have left outstanding for his benefit after the war. A gesture of good will taken for granted."

"Shall I include a date you will wish to negotiate with him?"

"Sometime before he has any ability to meddle preferably, but please note I will not be the one *leading.*"

Reaching the second floor they headed into the guest wing. Spotting a more-or-less dressed Ryuko dragging her feet into an open bedroom they would soon be operating in.

"The last Matoi is capable enough to ensure he remains focused on the negotiations. *And only on that.*"

"Ma'am?"

"Later Houka. Thank you for your service in advance. And... good luck."

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"This is still *completely* wrong in every conceivable way. You know if I was a doctor this would be against the Hippocratic in like a million ways right?"

"I can assure you I am not being harmed nor coerced against my will into this procedure. We do what we can because we *must* Nonon. There is simply no alternative to the calculated weaning schedule, and believe me *we've tried to find one*. Are we ready to proceed?"

"Need to run your health checks. By the way why is Red here if she won't do *jack-all* to help?"

"To *fix* her in case you fuck up half-pint. Some advice, *don't*, or I swear I will fuck you up. *And not in the fun way*."

"I'm freaking helping you!"

"*Calm thyself my friend*. Mine other liveth with terrible burden."

"She can lift most anything. You're not telling me her fat balloons are close to straining her."

"Burden of the heart, *not back*. She always worries about my *mortal fragility* during this process. Or any time my blood flows forth really, she means well. Leave her to her whims."

Pink haired *nurse* had come as promised to start her new *assignment* for the Kiryuins. Guest bedroom rearranged to function as their temporary drawing station as planned. The sizable bed was occupied by stoic *donor to the supply* in simple t-shirt and sweats, pinkette sat on a stool next to the bed-frame surrounded by various instruments on the beside table at arm's length, and unnervingly still observer propped up on the room's windowsill across the bed from them. Careful vigil watching birds flitting about their mid-morning routines among the tree boughs while her fingers hypnotically danced multiple threaded needles around a flesh toned scrap of material vaguely resembling a bra cup. Everything in place Nonon snapped on a pair of rubber gloves to

begin with a thermometer in Satsuki's mouth.

"Temperature is--"

"Thirty-four, five-ish."

"*That?*"

The voice had been almost mechanical. Shot off from the window's vicinity before she could even wait for results. Moving on after finding the number accurate she picked up a blue polyester strap connected to a hose and slid it up Satsuki's right arm. Velcro'd in place a small pump filled it with air until releasing with a hiss. Moving over to the attached display she waited for results. And was once again beaten to the punch.

"Blood pressure is--"

"*One-eighteen over sixty.*"

"Okay Red how the hell are you- where did she go?"

Looking up from the pulse monitor for answers she found the windowsill vacant. Turning to the side she almost fell off the stool when manic blue eyes rimmed with temporary blood and Fiber mascara filled her vision. Face just centimeters from her own, Ryuko's voice returning to *hungry*.

"*Magic~!*"

"Fucking shit!!"

While Nonon fought to calm down the room was filled with a terrifyingly familiar laugh that echoed back from the walls. Which was swiftly ended by a chiding from the bed.

"Ryuko what did I say about altering your appearance?"

Blue orbs rolled around but she returned to her window seat and usual look. Picking up needlework where she left off. An actual answer mumbled out boringly.

"I can feel shit alright? Most of that's in the air. Can get that info *and more* by directly touching someone. *Senketsu used to be real good at it...*"

"*Riiight...* Satsuki are you *really* sure on half a liter? I don't know when your last draw was but how much do you actually need?"

"Today's take goes to storage to replace what will be used tonight which is from roughly three months back. The volume we require is carefully controlled above normal donation standards. We are maximizing out of necessity while her intake drops slowly each

month. Her body adapts to what she wills of it and the carefully laid out schedule for her reduced feedings still demands an amount split over four bottles. Do it."

She shook her head but did as told. Site was swabbed with cotton ball doused in iodine, rubber tourniquet applied, and careful gaze to judge where to hit. Small needle uncapped and affixed to its apparatus eased through her arm. Now free blood slowly worked its way through a clear tube to the first of two collection bags.

"We're going to be here a while this line you got is kinda small. *Really small*. Doesn't this screw up the red cells? Or does that even matter if it's going to her stomach..."

"Smaller output, slower bleed rate, more control on amount drawn. Which is particularly of great importance. Hypothetically contents are strictly broken down for their *nutritional value* and calories by her threads."

First bag filling slowly left Nonon's mind, and ears, to wander. Mentally counting the different sounds of the estate. Recounting with a frown when certain things didn't add up.

"Is it just me or does something sound *wrong*?"

"I was under the impression you admired the song of birds?"

"No, I mean there are three of us and I only hear two of us breathing... *It's kinda creepy*."

"*Hmm?*"

Opening her left eye Satsuki turned her head to the side to study one somewhat bare profile against the light. Fingers had stopped their work on silver slivers some time ago leaving the odd flick of blue following some form of movement outside to be the only sign of life still within. She moved to stretch her left arm over after deducing the discrepancy.

"Imouto, I'm fine."

Face shifted slightly so gears could properly study the bed. Spotting open hand grabbing toward her a red line formed out of her right shoulder as silently requested. Snaking along the floor it worked up onto the bed to rest its end in the open palm. Smiling back and Grasping it Satsuki rubbed along the tip with her thumb. Rhythmic rise and fall of dark blue chest starting back up again shortly after.

"*Better~?*"

All she got was a blush and glowing red tingle of comfort in

answer.

"Fufufu."

"Isn't the person in the procedure supposed to be the one comforted?"

"I'd be lying if I said there was not some measure of security in knowing my all powerful guardian angel is within grasp Nonon~.

"I can hear you fucks whisperin fer yer information."

"Oh hush dear. Enjoy the peace."

More minutes in silence passed, Nonon going through mechanical motions checking the process. Silence agitating her until she forced herself to fill it with *anything*. It was earlier than wanted, and might ruin the surprise, but she needed to bring up *something*.

"H-Hey Red?"

A grunt answered, she was at least pretending to listen.

"If you're not gonna do anything else at all, you could sing or--"

"No."

"Why in the hell not?"

"Because... No."

"That's not an answer."

"Well why should I then!?"

"Because there is nothing wrong with *singing*! Do you know how hard it is to find people that can tell a pitch, let alone produce!? You have pipes damn it, use them!"

"Fuck off."

"What crawled down your windpipe and died Ryuko."

"She used to be a *traveling minstrel*. To what degree I've not been told but from what I gather she equates having an audience to *rougher times*, possibly jeering critics. But those days are long gone. This has been a rather nice morning Imouto would you be so kind as to indulge us? It'd be nice to hear your pleasant vocal productions *intentionally* for once. *Pretty please?*"

"That's playing dirty Nee-san."

"No, dirty would be bribing you."

"...Are you going to?"

"Do I have to?"

"*It'd be nice.*"

"You're impossible."

"I'm negotiating from the position of strength."

"*You've learned well.*"

"*Only from the best.*"

"*That so, hmmm?* Your terms and conditions?"

"What, *seriously?*"

"But of course my dear. You've come to recognize that selling the fruit of your fingers can actually be rewarding, I'm merely inquiring on the price you put on your throats productions."

"Sats that's... it's not the same."

"I'm not asking for anything ridicules Ryuko."

"You really wanna know how much to do that shit again? *Shelf. Bra.*"

"N. O. At least one of us needs to look professional, and you're already monopolizing the *risque* half of our duo. How much progress have we made Nonon?"

"*Uh*, w-we're at about a quarter done."

"Terms rejected dear, that one's *not* going to happen."

"*Not gonna happen* is pretty much it Eyebrows."

"Ryuko what about being a traveling musician was so wrong? What have you not told me?"

"...*Fuckin fine*... Can we get yer birthday off next month?"

"That would be absurdly childish, *but* for arguments sake I'm going to say yes *for now.*"

"Neoprene."

"Neo-Oh, Oh my... Continue?"

"White, two-piece."

"That sounds disconcertingly straightforward. *What's the catch?*"

"*Unlined.*"

"Hazardous when wet."

"*That's the idea.*"

"In this hypothetical wet bikini endeavor would you be joining me?"

"*I'd be driving so yeah.*"

"*Hmm? Explain yourself.*"

"Private boat with a cabin and some nice food. Picnics on the bow or whatever. Spend the night rocking with the waves... *Or making them if there aren't any.*"

"That... Actually that sounds *rather pleasant*. Do you even have the *slightest* idea how to run a boat though?"

"If you say yes I will *fucking learn.*"

"...Do you have any idea how much yachts cost in the long run?"

"Nothing too big and stupid. Buy something for like four people used, rebuild ourselves, park it in that one unloading yard off the sea connected to a warehouse complex we got north."

"*MmmHmmm....* You've put some serious thought into this."

"I figured the last *cruise* we were on shouldn't be the actual last one after *I used your head as a speed-bag...* And we can take the nerd's laptop and tape it up in a cupboard so he freaks out for a while, it'd be great!"

"*Mmm...* While I would love to accept your conditions Imouto that sounds more like an involved project much longer than a day. Maybe for a holiday break in the future. We have a launch to handle among other pressing business, so unfortunately no. *For now.* Speaking of boats though that reminds me you're going to need to brush up on some files I'll have for you by the end of tomorrow."

"Eh?"

"We will finally be retaking what is rightfully yours from a little man with a fetish for gold that owns a shipyard."

Through the red line in her hand she could feel the mental chain of figuring out what that meant. Initial confusion rolling into a

cold realization which turned into a deep seated *cringing disgust*. Leaping from the window Ryuko landed without a bounce on the bed. Crawling over she bristled with power while staring down into Satsuki's eyes.

"We have to go talk to the *slime ball*!?"

"Specifically you have to yes. It's *your* claim after all. If I went to collect alone he could argue I married you for your material worth, *which couldn't be further from the truth*, but would take us all into a prolonged court battle which will waste everyone's time. I'll still be there with you of course... *slime ball*? You met him while conscious exactly *once*, while not an inaccurate descriptor what did he do in the two minutes you were alone together when we were in Osaka last year to impart such an impression?"

"That fuck eyed me like prime rib. And if he was any greasier we could deep fry shit on him. Pretty sure he was trying to buy my ass."

"...Really now?"

"Yeah."

"Well then it will be nice to see him squirm while rightfully losing such a lucrative profit stream, *no~*?"

"When are we going?"

"That is *to be announced*. There are things that need to be prepared, proof of ownership to have on hand, and such. Would I be correct in assuming you don't want to rifle through that much paperwork?"

"I'd rather not..."

Moving into a cross legged sitting position next to her the following thirty minutes were filled with more relative silence. With the second bag finally sealed off and safely positioned in a case for transport downstairs Nonon started preparing a bandage to wrap around Satsuki's arm until she was waved off and told not to bother. Curious she watched Ryuko swing a leg over to sit on stationary pelvis and let her Fibers out. Coils behind her she leaned forward after flattening her skirt's pleats as asked to take Satsuki's right arm in hand.

"It wass a bandage that brought ssomeone elsse-... else into our shit, let's not do that again yeah?"

"A logical conclusion my dear. But can you even produce the necessary power to do this on current supply? You've strained yourself this month as it is to be in such a state. Deeper

internal repairs require significantly increased effort and concentration on your part. This isn't necessary."

"Prevents longer term discomfort, removes evidence. Best end result."

"Surely your energy reserves are too low to be safe?"

"Extra *repair cycle* is nothing. Margin of error sufficiently covered by already leaked connective tissue around site... *just gonna sit around and be a waste bruising otherwise.*"

"I trust you know yourself best. Fine."

Cotton ball removed from the small wound Ryuko hesitantly brought her mouth to it. Initial nauseating taste giving way to the euphoria of warm blood she had to concentrate to stop from suckling on it. Instead bringing her tongue to life with an undulation as she pressed it to the hole. *Patient* going rigid with pain as her arm was invaded by minuscule Fiber lances. Brow's held their strained furrow for the seconds it took to re-knit flesh. Finally relaxing only when they were retracted from her, repairing the entrance holes on their way out. Site kissed and body hugged in sincere apology for *inflicting pain*.

"A-Are y-y-you... o-okay?"

"I'm fine, *thank you*. You?"

"G-Good... g-g-good..."

Ryuko held on for a little longer, no worse off than before. Until she shakily sat up pale as the sheets, smiled, and collapsed sideways. Body completely limp and unresponsive, visible red lines going dark as her skin went paper white.

"What the shit Red!?!... Ryuko!?"

Calmly Satsuki sat up to examine her while Nonon panicked, held breath released after finding a pulse on her neck. She fixed younger's clothes before making a motion for Nonon to be quiet. Gathering the various items that would need transport and disposal they closed the door behind them to give deathly still form some space to rest.

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Back down in the basement preparation work for separating, bottling, and mixing of the fresh material into existing stock began. Satsuki working to carefully make it all ready for cold storage tucked in among wine bottles and coolers. Pulling out other various containers and bottles to prep for tonight. Nonon

jumped to sit on the counter opposite her looking for answers while she worked.

"The hell happened to her Satsuki!? She looked fucking *DEAD!*"

"Overexertion causing a temporary *dormancy*. While I absolutely hate when it happens, it's nothing too serious."

"This shit's happened before then?"

"Her body won't let her die so easy, and she won't let herself go out and *hunt* like *her subconscious undoubtedly demands*. It's a defensive measure to protect the hive during energy reserve dips caused by such a situation. All external function temporarily ceases to insure her core can maintain full capability *thank gods*. She jumped over her current caloric supply, thus, dormancy."

"*Fuck*, how much like a Kamui is she?"

"*I would have been fine...* Frankly too much for comfort but enough to provide peace of mind. She will be back up by noon once she absorbs breakfast fully. I'll check on her after finishing up down here. Move her over to our bed and clean up the rest of the room."

"Want help?"

"You've done what was requested of you to the letter, no more will be necessary. You are now free to go about your day whenever you wish."

"I don't have anything else planned besides being here Satsuki. Besides I have a delivery to make and that little conversation upstairs pretty much confirms what I found."

"*Oh?* You've pieced something else together? *Mind sharing?*"

"Not now, she needs to be awake for this. And I can't just leave you alone with her in a *hunger coma* given what she *eats*."

"As you have witnessed she will *put herself into that short coma* if it means my minor benefit. I do appreciate your company though."

"That all aside what did Dog want earlier? I'm not buying him suddenly remembering that you have stuff to *reclaim*."

"*Oh there is much to reclaim actually*. Kaneo stole Uzu's stake in the corporation by some technical means. We're going to discuss the situation later, everything I said upstairs was true though. Myself and Ryuko will be paying him a visit."

"Okay... Why?"

"Why?"

"If the shithead did that why not just send the authorities after him? You're not telling me that your whole legal department working together can't pin a guy that regularly works around the Yakuza with *something*."

Satsuki put her hands down on the counter before slumping forward a little. Taking a deep breath before her voice rattled quietly with tensing power that shook her shoulders with a threat of violence barely restrained.

"Oh it would be trivial to anonymously tip off police about the litany of things I ignore, except he pays them in that town. And bringing in higher authorities will only bring more scrutiny upon myself. The only other option is handle things *in house*."

"Y-You mean *operations* are back on the table? He's made you that mad?"

"It just so happens that while high profile *guests* are on his *disgusting premises* he might fully focus his pitifully small short-sighted attention span on ensuring we are properly *cared for*. Watched by security. It would be a shame if some let's say *enterprising individuals trained in specific skills* just so happened to decide that such an *opportunity* to slip past his security should not go to waste... Of course as the head of a legitimate company and *simple home maker* nowadays that vowed to do things by the book I could *never* officially order such a diabolical and illegal act of corporate espionage... such as *viciously tearing apart* the Takarada syndicate server cluster until I can hold it in my grasp *and violently crush it in his god damn face like a thousand shards of glass!*... Greedy sniveling fool promised me that his business would stay out of mine, *I guess I was the fool for believing him*. There is a mountain of things I could forgive now that the need for military precision is no more. *Shoving his filthy fingers into my long term plans isn't. One. Of. Them.* Care to join in the eventual act of correcting this injustice *my friend and former lieutenant?*"

Nonon stared with wide eyes and just a hint of that old *fear for her life*. She gulped as her beret slid off letting several knives fall onto the floor with a clatter. Satsuki wasn't mad, she was *livid*. Nodding with understanding she dropped off her improvised seat to snap a salute off.

"It would be an honor to clear my schedule to attend the upcoming meetings in person Lady Satsuki! I'll spread the call to arms to anyone otherwise able to attend as well... Do you need a minute? You're a little more unraveled right now then you used to get."

"I'll be... *Fine*."

"Ma'am that was about as convincing as Gamagori trying to tell me he doesn't comprehend swearing. As your nurse for the day I'm prescribing you some *sit down and chill*. We can fix that mess. For now as soon as this stuffs squared away go sort out your *vampire-bride*, I'll take care of lunch."

"but you're our guest--"

"No buts or I'm calling Coconut to yell your ear off! Doctor's orders before I start involving actual medical professionals."

"...*Thank you.*"

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As an unobstructed moon rose far above the house two individuals were sitting across from each other in the library once again. Ryuko had woken up to devour lunch like a starving monster as promised, her fingers currently flying through a second brown bra cup now attached to the first. Red gloved hands a slight blur she monitored with an annoyed frown. Midway through the floral pattern on it's surface she placed her work on the table for temporary inspection. Quickly glancing across before starting again. Oblivious to the stares Nonon was just leaning back in her chair lazily scrolling through texts waiting for Satsuki.

"*Why are you ssstill here sshrimp?*"

"Cause Satsuki wanted me to be here for these nutty *tea parties* if I could be around. And could you stop hissing at me like a broken water line?"

"*Don't you have better ssshit... shit to do?*"

"No bands that I really care about are in town tonight and I don't feel like traveling more than I already have to daily. I'd much rather visit my best friend and enjoy pleasant intellectual conversation given the alternatives."

"You're here for something and to stare at my Fiber *assss...* ass get loopy. Don't pretend it's some high society bullshit."

"If you don't believe me then how about we just start now?"

Putting her phone away she leaned forward onto the table. Loosely folding her hands she stared at the work coming together while talking.

"I think I know why you won't sing. And I have proof!"

Finger's came to a halt with a cringing snort. Holding her left hand up three sewing needles were now *through* Ryuko's pointer and ring fingers. Calmly she plucked them out one by one with a barely audible squelching noise, pulled her blood back to where it was supposed to be, and undid the mistake before setting the piece aside so she wouldn't ruin it.

"I *uh*, sorry?"

"You did *what*?"

"Went looking for answers about *you* while I've gone around the country."

Heavy eyes bored into Nonon's. Before she could start grilling the shorter woman though Nee-san turned up with a tray in one hand and a cooler in the other. Walking into the room and taking the third seat between them around the square table Satsuki let multiple red lines on the floor rise up to take the off-white plastic box from her grasp. Carefully placing the tray down she took two china cup sets off and finished her distribution of supplies by pouring out fresh brew.

"Apologies for the wait. Tea, biscuits, cucumber sandwiches, and four bottles for mine Imouto. If you need anything else please do not hesitate to ask."

Pushing her chair back Ryuko abandoned her work and the worries about what Nonon had been doing to shuffle off to her usual bay-window bench. Lines sent this way and that to gather various pillows to make it more comfortable. Depositing cold container in it's place within reach she pulled the first bottle to fill the night's first glass. Downing it to take the edge off before refiling it for a second to be nursed much more slowly as her red lights came to life in their unstoppable glow. Nonon ignored a questioning eyebrow, her own frown aimed at retreating woman.

"Oh come on Red what ever happened to conversation?"

"*Fuck off!*"

"Way to be sociable. Whatever. So Satsuki how goes preparations for this big opening on the home front besides the whole *new situation* stuff?"

"Sales are up, which means demand is up, which means production needs to go up, which means my stress is going up..."

"*Which meanss her asssss goess up a lot wanting ssome unwinding-*"

"Ryuko!"

"I just tell it how it is Nee-san."

"Behave. *Gods that hits you fast sometimes.* You're forgetting something."

"I know, I know *book shit.* Do I have to?"

"Do you have anything more productive to do?"

"Well I need to change some spark plugs, trim some branches near the gutters, sharpen the kitchen knives, finish two outfits, and rework a couple nighties."

Putting her cup down Nonon excitedly rubbed her hands together. Now that everyone was present she could play her trump card with a referee present to prevent *damage* to her person.

"I have something for that!"

Both Kiryuins turned to find her smirking.

"Nonon?"

"I did some legwork the other day. Digging deep into as many little bars and dives that I could to get a copy of their stage bookings. After going through enough of them I found a path which ended at a little pawn shop. I asked her to see if she would just admit it but... Everything now makes so much more sense than before! *I'll be right back~.*"

Trying to figure out what she meant as Nonon sprinted for the front door and her car Satsuki shot her other a look. Surprised to find her stuck mid sip, eyes a mile wide staring where she had left. Slowly moving to get up after draining her glass all at once.

"Imouto? Would you happen to have any idea what she is talking about? Would this have anything to do with earlier today perhaps when you refused to--"

"No! *I mean...* No I t-totally don't know what... s-she's..."

Moments later pink reappeared, dragging a large gun case behind her. Pulling out the table's fourth chair she placed it down with a look of smug satisfaction. Woman across the room locked onto it in abject horror. One calculating expression turning back and forth between the polar opposite reactions to it's existence.

"Alright I take it both of you know something. Could either of you please enlighten me as to what could be so polarizing? A murder weapon of some sort?"

"While *she* didn't herself, she was complicit with a murder alright."

"Shut-up! *SHUT-UP* and take it away you little fucking gremlin or I *sswear I will rip out your tongue and desstroy you with-*"

"Oh I will shut up, *Drifter*, but only when I dispense a justice to this world that must be wrought! I need to reunite you with-"

Ryuko was a red blur. Shooting across the room to plant a fiber covered hand over Nonon's mouth. Almost blasting things off the table in her wake.

"*Don't you fucking dare sssay anything! SS-SSatss no wait, I c-can explain-!!!*"

Having got up with an unbearable curiosity Satsuki strolled around and popped two latches on the case to open it. Eyebrow quirking up with a grimace as Ryuko groaned in defeat. Releasing the other girl she shuffled back to her bench seat to try and bury herself in pillows as the contents were examined. Nonon gingerly took out the electric guitar and deposited it on the table to get a better light on it. Surface completely covered in enough depictions of nude and half naked women to form a wallpaper of stickers.

"Ryuko mentioned having preformed musically for money on occasion... Never mentioned... This. *Huh*. Nonon care to explain what is the significance of this battered instrument coated in... vulgarities?"

"*Aha!* There was no chance in hell that she could just magically become some kind of vocalist overnight after she did nothing like that through the whole damn war. If someone sang like that on Honnouji I would have heard about it through the grapevine. So I looked up to see if she had history on guest books. *And she did*, under the stage name *Kanto Drifter*. And this, *this!* was her ax. Sold for enough cash to purchase a train ticket to Tokyo and pocket money exactly eight months before she first showed up on our front gates. One *really* abused Candy-apple-red reproduction Stratocaster plastered with stickers marking each *gay bar and burlesque venue* she played at along her pretty extensive *unofficial tour* that must have started when she was in middle-school."

"*Burlesque shows?* She worked in watershed districts. *Oh gods... that would explain some things she knows...*"

"She was a stacked middle school then highschool girl in a short skirt taking the stage to cover songs for crowds of desperate, lonely, men and women."

"Imouto I-... Ryuko?"

Woman in question had sucked down a whole bottle and completely buried herself in throw pillows. Curled fiber lines on top of the small mountain she created as soon as the poor instrument hit the table. That was a time she did not want to revisit. But Nee-san was going to relentlessly prod *again*, and the *pink bitch fucking knew*. Best not to let the troll's imagination wander. Building up her courage she rolled out of the pile, shuffled over to the table, and silently took the item into her hands. Turning it over in the lamp light while Nonon's smug grin grew wider by the minute.

"Well Red. *Am I right~?*"

"It-... I-... Sats I told you about going to bars to earn some cash playing with shitty bands to cover songs yeah... I might of *neglected* to mention specifically *where*. I played it up and I was supposed to *maybe go further than that*. I was a *little rebellious dyke* away from school every afternoon with a guitar on my back and a chip on my shoulder... Lot of passionately *bad* renditions of songs belted out around me while I gave microphones *on-stage audio-oral*... When I got a gig, the pay was damn good compared to the usual jobs... Being a visibly blushing mess probably helped... *The atmosphere didn't do much else.*"

Both observers sat back down and watched as Ryuko became reacquainted with the damaged instrument. Red fingers brushing past the extra metal string coming out of the lowest tuning fork in the head reluctantly. Eyes going far off beyond the distance as she absentmindedly put the strap over her shoulder and strummed out a couple scales. Getting back up Nonon pulled a small black box out of the case and plugged it in under the table. Pulling out another cable she plugged one end into the amp and stood before Ryuko triumphantly to hold up the other end to her.

"Every single regular to every joint had a load of compliments when I turned up and asked about you. And I've heard it myself. So Red, how about another *hurrah?*"

"You have *no* idea how many people tried to pay me to fuck after playing this thing..."

"That was part of the *shtick* wasn't it though?"

"Was supposed to. Never went through with it, never had the nerve... Taught myself how to lap dance though and that's been... *recently appreciated.*"

They both looked over at Satsuki. Which stared into her cup with a blush and shrugged.

"I did *impale* myself a little on the horn a couple times in private. I didn't tell the crowds, but they just *knew* that. Never

washed it either... Looks like the pawn broker had it cleaned though, missing some phone numbers sharpie'd onto the neck I never called."

"Ew?"

"*You have no idea short stuff.* Why did you have to go and dig up this corpse? I left it behind for a reason."

"Because I can not stand idly by while talent goes unused. Even yours you *artistically talented fuck-wit*. I hate to admit it but Satsuki was right, you're not dumb. You're just right-hemisphere dominant."

"*What?* Are you off your meds or was that bottle laced with some heavy shit?"

"*Jesus fucking-* It means you're artistically inclined you dipstick. Which is what's been bugging me. When we fought your head was filled with enough music that your *comrade* could counter weaponize it! You can make it! Why the fu... why did you stop!?"

"Because I felt dirty as fuck. There's nothing good about being paid to pander to sex starved crowds... *And that only made shit more awkward when I met Senketsu.* Aside from that got a letter that told me I could actually go the fuck home for once. I-... I didn't know what dad would say. If I cared what he had to say. I decided I wouldn't lie, I would answer if he asked what I had been up to. If He kicked me out again I was ready for that, if he didn't... Figured showing up for the first time in years with a guitar plastered in *gay shit* would not be the best way to tell him I wouldn't give him grand-kids after being an only child... *What a crock of shit THAT turned out to be...* Was a little busy after that... *A-And a little unstable.* Do I want to even know how little this pile of shit is worth nowadays?"

"Exactly four-thousand yen."

"Y-You didn't haggle did you?"

"Got a case thrown in for free to take it away on the spot."

"Ow..."

"Well *Ryuko this was my department.* I don't know how shitty things were, I wasn't there. But tying that all to what you're actually good at is stupid. You put food in your mouth because you had *talent*. What would you have done otherwise, *hmm?* Nothing remotely decent I'd guess from the stories. There's nothing inherently wrong in playing for crowds, no matter how low you think of them. Even the geniuses of the classical age produced schlock for money in the same way. You do what you have to, to do what you *want to*. My orchestra knows how to play fucking Mario and cartoon themes,

big whoop! It let's us afford to play Bach and Beethoven in the same hall. So what's it gonna be? You gonna continue to stifle yourself, or are you going to grow a pair and *get my respect*. There's no shame in having a job."

Hesitantly she took the jack and remembered how to plug it in with just her left hand. Right turning the forks until the strings felt *about* what they used to years ago. Stopping she retracted her gloves to let bare fingers re-learn the feel of metal strings that had already been in need of replacement when she got it, paint chipped in the one corner near the bottom where the bar broke off. Forever lost in the cheers of a crowd in a small smokey venue she couldn't recall.

"Imouto?"

Snapping to attention she looked over at Nonon turning some knobs on the black box now on the table, Satsuki leaning back with a bemused expression while looking at her.

"What?"

Getting up she walked over to the cooler to grab a bottle, filled her designated wine glass with it's contents and came back to the table.

"You're forgetting something. Also, you look something between absolutely insane and *intriguingly whole* standing there."

"I've played in less."

At that her smile dropped like a rock. Ryuko's own smile growing after that.

"Kidding, mostly. I practiced in my underwear when I could afford motels and on the more lucrative nights... *Beds for two or three.*"

Grabbing her glass she downed the contents before tapping it to her chin. Fingers strumming the strings to give Nonon an idea of how to tune the amp.

"I'm going to burn this thing in a pit outside later. *But...* Maybe one last send off. Something that was popular in places."

"Red my ears will only take so much of a dying instrument, get on with this shit so I can gloat about being right for the next twenty-odd years."

"Then give me a drum beat you little shit.... *hmmm.*

S-Shot through the heart! And you're to blame.

Darling you give loooove a bad name~."

Satsuki had to remember to give Nonon a bonus with the next shipment. She sat back smiling in her front row seat to a glimpse into a life she wished beyond anything to understand. Before the fibers, before Honnouji. Nonon took a pair of teaspoons and began banging them along on the table and saucers without complaint, smiling herself genuinely. Broken down instrument betraying it's appearance to produce surprisingly clear notes. One formerly broken down individual starting to sway with the tune, lost in it. Confidence gaining by the chord.

Reaffirming to her just how vital ensuring her rose could bloom in it's garden was to her.

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Later that night, around one in the morning, found the trio standing around a pit Ryuko had dug out back as promised. In the chilled April air Satsuki stood holding a camping lantern so she and Nonon could see. Pinkette passionately arguing with Ryuko and refusing to hand over the guitar held protectively in her arms.

"Damn it Ryuko don't do this! This piece of shit can't be a reproduction, there's no fucking way! Let me take it to someone who can repair it!!"

"I will burn this thing and send off my past viking style. I don't need what it represents kicking around. Moving forward and shit."

"And I was all for that until you started playing the God damn thing, I'm telling you it's an original sixty-four Stratocaster! And you covered it up in so many shitty stickers of half naked chicks fucking each other no one else could tell! Where *the hell* did you get this thing!?!"

"A trash heap. I was walking along at night and I saw a couple guitars sitting next to a dumpster. Found a red one, turned out to be the only electric, kept it anyway. Was an absolute bitch finding an amp that worked to lug back to my dorm room. Case was easier to get, proved useful for a longer time."

"You will need to burn me to burn this thing Red!"

"That can be arranged."

"Settle down children. Nonon, why?"

"This things a serious collector's item, and destroying pieces of music history is tantamount to genocide!"

"Ryuko, why?"

"Cause it's a piece of shit that reminds me that the closest things to friends I had were one night stands I paid to leave, and why I started drinking young. And now that I know it exists there's always gonna be that one part of me that *actually wants to keep it around...*"

"As the impartial mediator I side with the defense. If this item is of significance to your history than it shouldn't be wantonly destroyed. More importantly cultivating your artistic talents means bringing forth your innermost abilities and I *cherish* those moments to the fullest of *my* ability."

"Pulling out the sentimental Nee-san card?"

"Negotiating my dear, negotiating. Now then, fix the hole this matter is *settled*."

"*Whatever.*"

"Nonon, get this thing properly restored. As a trade off it must be *total*, none of these... *symbols*, must remain."

"Value will take a hit doing a total overhaul."

"Doesn't matter, we are not looking for an investment. Consider this one of her *favors*."

"Hey!"

"*Oh hush, I'll repay it to you at some point in the future I promise.* Good night Nonon, shall I walk you to your car?"

"I've got it. Thank you for being a voice of reason Lady Satsuki."

"*I hope it stays that way...*"

"I'm sorry what was that?"

"Nothing Nonon, *nothing*."

Chapter End Notes

So that was a wait... I know.

While written weeks and weeks ago heavily debated the merits of the current path that needed fine tuning. Along with a smattering of writers block more recently which was bound to happen eventually...

Blah excuses.

Got loads of things in this to still fix but also got some progress done for other projects in the down time.

Here's to hoping some things are hopefully lining up and I can get the rest of this ride up eventually.

A hall, a debt, and a... Kitsune?

Chapter Summary

Satsuki wears a hat.

Nonon doesn't wear her hat.

Ryuko can't physically fit a hat.

Chapter Notes

Things get lightly hot-and-bothered, then kinda confrontational, and then weird. Just a little bit though. Also pull up a chair cause this thing's roughly 3 times normal chapter length which may or may not have been a mistake. I don't know.

You can't say you have not been warned though.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

"You're still in here? Have you been staring at that stand since we got up?"

"It's getting used today."

"After work?"

"No. Got an address to hit up around eight. I can still give you a ride today if ya want though, plenty of time to travel and my shit will fit behind the seats."

"Imouto--"

"I know, shit's still gettin done. I don't need to babysit them *all* the time."

Moving away from the door frame she walked past a number of half-assembled items hanging on strings to sit next to Ryuko on the bed. Spying a red rectangle nearby she reached over to swipe it off her old nightstand. Pulling it's charging cord free she made sure it was on vibrate before shifting back over to poke Ryuko in the cheek to get her attention. Failing that with a small frown she went to plan *B*.

Starting at a bare lower back she ran her fingers up Ryuko's spine, lingering only to feel straps visible under black shirt clinging to her upper torso, to her neck and into her hair. Slight twitches indicating that her brooding mask was cracking. Gently starting to poke around the exposed mass of quasi-nerves in among her hair's roots she moved up until she found the spot that made the woman's abs tense and sit up into the touch. Concentrating light rubs and scratches there until she finally got a furiously blushing head to turn away from the metal assembly with a shiver and soft noise in her throat. Pulling away from the *scary-nice* touch she pouted at the smiling form using her biology to get her attention.

"I'm *n-not* a stupid cat..."

"I mean no offense dear but the longer I observe you, the more I highly doubt that~. All I wanted to say was a thank you for telling me about your schedule *at least by thirty minutes* in advance. Also a reminder to please have your phone securely on your person when traipsing about so if I need *or a-admittedly just want* to contact you I can."

Slipping past a hand halfheartedly going up to grab it Satsuki pushed the device in her grasp straight to skin exposed by a relatively modest cut down the front of Ryuko's shirt. Nudging fitted stretching fabric to the side to slot a short glass and metal edge between two ribs over her breast. Giving her a pleading look when Ryuko figured what she meant by *secure*.

"You *tryin* to give me boob cancer?"

"You have so far proven to be immune to deep space radiation and the likelihood a modern device could actually *do that* already is about zero. It's truthfully in more danger than *thy assets* are from such a position behind them. I figured under here would be the most likely spot for it to survive unless you have a more suitable and or comfortable location to use."

"Pockets not good enough anymore?"

"There is nothing inherently wrong with them, no. Especially the *real ones* you always include when called for in items meant for our use... Thank you for that by the way."

"O-Only the best."

"Mmm~. But I don't think the ones within thine current vestments are as effective. Which ones located in any of your *short-shorts* would this physically fit in, let alone won't let it get crushed when you try to sit down? *Not very practical in my opinion.*"

"Oi."

"Worry naught my dear. Compared to the *literal handful* of items some of your more *delicate* outfits are comprised of, I actually have no problems with you going about as you currently are. Including *the midriff baring dark mantle over thy mammaries*."

"...Really? No complaints about being *inappropriate* that I'll ignore for the most part anyway?"

Reaching for an exposed hip she pinched a black frilled strap. Releasing it to lightly snap back to where it rested with a smile and shake of her head.

"Yes there is some *lovely lewd lace* creeping up from below thy rather low waistline and a significant number of detailed *outlines* showing through from thy support up top, but you toe the line between *risque* and *obscene* oh so very well sometimes. Otherwise matching shades of pure black on black *on black* is difficult to get wrong. *I think? Yes. Right?*"

"Yeah it's pretty basic. Ten points for Eyebrows."

"*Oh good* I'm actually learning things then. I'll understand *style* eventually I promise."

"Yeah? *Quiz next week?*"

"*Hmm*. Bit short notice don't you think?"

"You've managed worse."

"*Not wrong~*. If I *score well enough* might I be entrusted with picking mine own panties in the morning again? You've made most of them as sets, I would hope while holding half I could figure out the rest from there by now."

"Fuck no, that's my coffee in the morning."

"I thought that was burying your wonderfully warm face into the front of my night slip until I force us out of bed? *I never get to spoon your back...*"

"*S-Second serving.*"

"*Fufufu~*. Well, I couldn't in good conscious possibly deprive you of such a simple joy now could I. Do continue to wield thy power *responsibly*. Now, what about thy private communication device?"

"You know that this stupid thing could take a minute to fish out around people yeah?"

"I would much prefer to wait an *agonizing* sixty seconds to hear even a transmitted copy of your voice than sit in silence fretting over an infinite number of conjured up worst case scenarios as my

mind tends to do when left alone."

Still slightly blushing Ryuko took the thing and with some concentration tucked it safely in a fiber pocket behind her bones. Satisfied that it wouldn't hinder her movements after some stretches she pushed back a little onto the bed to cross her legs. Fingers playing with the edges of her knee highs.

"Happy?"

"Almost. I'm leaving you to go out and about with Nonon. Without supervision. There are a multitude of ways that can end... *poorly* if prior events are any indication."

"I'm still not apologizing for almost breaking her face open, fuckin deserves it. It's not *my* fault she's an *insufferable cunt*."

"Ryuko--"

"No, don't *Ryuko* me it's fucking true! She hates me."

"Nonon doesn't hate you, that I know for a fact."

"Sure has a hilarious way of fuckin showin it."

Fully leaning back to flop onto the soft seat Satsuki let her briefcase fall from her lap. Staring up at the immense web of colored string rigging above while trying to stay diplomatic.

"Is it a strange form of spite? Latent feelings expressed in a manner beyond our comprehension? I wish I could tell you the answer. But I don't specifically know why she's more... on edge with you. More so than the rest of our friends at least."

"Makes two of us."

"We *are* a product of specific *adverse circumstances* Imouto, the nuances of interpersonal relationship just might conceivably be beyond us for some time yet. From what little I do know though, which you didn't see and I didn't see until it was practically slapped into my face, the situation is far more complicated than I have reference to reliably work down into a simple answer for you."

"See what? Us? Cause apparently fucking everyone else did."

"Sort of, *well she did that as well but... Maybe?* Please don't worry it's nothing too serious honestly. It's just a... social thing."

"Yeah, cause me and *society* are *real good pals*."

"...Believe me I know people can be the most stubborn, trying, and

annoying obstacles on the planet. But I think we're doing pretty well all things considered. If you seriously want to know her reasoning you can ask her in person directly. Just please be mindful of your strength."

"You've said it before, reason and shit. *Can't you just figure her out?*"

"I'd much rather not spread the contrivances I could imagine as fact. I would love if the world could be boiled down to mathematical reason, but *If we admit that human life can be ruled by reason, then all possibility of life is destroyed...* Every story is important, right Imouto? Everyone driven from different thoughts and emotions that can on occasion defy *all* logic. It's very unlike you to hesitate over direct confrontation which would be part of your very own ever so *complexed* internal logic by the way."

"...You never let me punch an answer out of her."

"Because you would *kill her* in the heated process of *interrogation*, and I cannot allow that for the same reason. While force when correctly applied can do wonders not every problem can be solved with the application of a hammer. Not every discussion should be directed with a knife. *Fear does not necessarily free the tongue.*"

"You're starting to sound like you did in yer foot stomping days."

"Then we should get moving about before I start shouting at pedestrians *hmm~?*"

"You would relapse hardcore back into *generalissimo Eyebrows the first?*"

"I will have you know we come from a long line of strong facial features to the best of my knowledge, so probably not the first... And I don't entirely know what would happen given the correct stimuli--"

"*Lady-road-rage.*"

"*Which...* is precisely why we shouldn't press the issue. *I'm sorry I don't have patience for blind stupidity.*"

"*Yeah, I get that. Strong?*"

"Pronounced, prominent, distinct, conspicuous, *regal* depending on who you ask."

"Lot of ways to say *big ass eyebrows.*"

"I tolerate *the nick-name* only because it's you. *Don't* add

prefixes."

"Ain't lyin though. Turn over."

"And how would that be relevant?"

"*Just do it.*"

"And what if I refuse?"

"I can flip the house."

"That would make an *awful* mess my dear."

"*Come ooonn.*"

"I might be *persuaded to* if I were asked politely."

"*Please*, turn over?"

Tucking her arms to her chest she hummed while rolling onto her stomach. Staring out the window before turning her attention back inside over her shoulder.

"Now what is this masterful point you have been attempting to prove?"

Falling sideways Ryuko landed on her. Quickly maneuvering her torso over Satsuki's lower back to pin her. Grabbing her pencil skirt and dragging it all the way up to her waist to squeeze her fingers into bare cheeks.

"That you in-fact have a *big ass, Eyebrows~.*"

"You uncouth barbarian you're wrinkling my suit! I demand to be delivered from my captivity t-this instant."

"I dun wanna~."

Disregarding distracting stocking clad legs slowly bending to try and push at her she clamped her teeth around a thin waistband fished from beneath the skirt's bunched material. Tugging at it with little growls before resting her head on firm flesh kept in a *wonderful shape* through regular and *irregular* exercise. Closing an eye when a nylon heel finally found her head and tried to push at her temple to dislodge her unsuccessfully.

"Ye gods the jailer is truly a wild beast! Oh if only I had mine trusted weapon, then this brute could be driven off. I am left with just one move to make it would seem."

"*Dealin wif it?*"

"No. *A bargain for my life instead~*. If thou woulds't release me from this entrapment, I could render thee the services of mine oral chasm to give *thy teats a morning tongue massage*. If it would suit you milady."

Ryuko's eyes shot open. Muscles halting as she processed that some million different ways. Each return unmistakably the same. Spitting out the dampened fabric she rose up to a kneeling position allowing Satsuki to right herself. Older checking her watch while fixing her clothes to ensure there was enough time for such a diversion.

"S-Seriously? Now? For real?"

"It's not *usually* a particularly involved activity, and it lights your mood up *significantly*. I will not sit idle while you just *space out* looking glum. We have about twelve minutes before we need to get going and luckily for you you're not *to the best of my knowledge* wearing anything *complicated*."

Getting on her hands and knees she moved gently but purposefully forward. Pushing her Imouto down before getting hands up her stomach and into her shirt. Mindful of the bra which she made no motion to remove she began lightly kneading while dragging herself further up alongside form blushing harder than before. Moving her mouth into the mass of soft hair now filled with fibers to pose a simple request throatily whispered with as much begging, bucking, *dripping* need that she could muster.

"*Pleassse let me worship thee~... "*

To her satisfaction the hair around chosen ear she nuzzled came to life with light and the garment preventing access was retracted inward as her toes curled, knees crossed with a shake. Happily humming she kissed her way down from a now pale earlobe, to a pair of lips left wanting more, to one of two raised spires in the dark fabric of her shirt. Thinking better of leaving wet spots she just let her breath ghost over it for a bit. Physically matching the quickening rise and fall of a chest shuddering from anticipation with a bob of her head up and down, back and forth between both sides to give them their equal due.

Goaded along with a whine she pulled back and let her hands previously occupied with holding the substantial flesh in place along outer sides move back around front. Sliding palms down over the skin far enough to get both thumbs out the bottom shirt edge three or four centimeters below the base of her breasts. Utilizing both digits to catch the item she now pushed up and over in reverse. Soft black material worked up to allow it's pale prisoners to spill forth freely on either side. Exposing a pair of worked up pink nubs to the comparatively cold air in the room. Only releasing the shirt when it was sufficiently out of the way up under her chin.

Mindful of the clock she skipped the usual rounds of pawing and rubbing down from her neck and shoulders. Locking with blue eyes trying their hardest to stay open and follow the process she smiled, wet her lips, and moved straight to taking a point between them. Burying her face into the warm fire burning to life. Enjoying the electric tingle growing from every lick and wet popping suckle.

Maybe an extra five minutes couldn't hurt...

She was late by ten.

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Bid farewell in the company garage with an excessive number of kisses planted all over her still messy hair that outright *refused to go down* after having her mind blown *without a single touch below her ribs* Ryuko ripped past the parking garage security gate and back out into morning traffic. Letting the drone of road noise between the low rumble of metal behind her and rain starting up above bring her back into focus. Not bothering to turn on the radio she sat stewing in her resurgence of coherent thoughts.

Any clues?

Latent feelings?

Of what, rage?

It was in her face, Satss knowss ssomething. Something we're missing.

But what?

Fuck if we- I damn it, know.

After going several blocks she finally turned off the road and into an almost empty parking lot. The building was larger than any kind of instrument repair shop she'd figured but must have been the right place. The rear of Nonon's car was visible behind some bushes in the distance. Evidence enough to try poking around at least.

Few people in the area drove neon-*puke* cars.

Ensuring at least three separate security camera's were watching over her ride she pulled out some rain and hair-hiding protection, a spare gray hoodie that was large enough to be mistaken for a dress, from behind her seat. Set to head off she pulled her old guitar case out and headed for the nearest door she hoped would be unlocked.

Passing inside she hadn't known what to expect. What she found though was wall to wall marble and gilded vaulted ceilings. Her entrance must have been a service door, but it still luckily led her into a massive frontal atrium that made her more than a little self conscious about the wet echoing squeaks her old sneakers were making. Moving toward the first sign of human life she could find there was a security guard behind a window that looked like he had been napping all morning. Fully waking up when she tapped the glass he noticed her luggage and asked for her name. Double checking a clipboard for *Ryuko* he nodded and directed her further in past some fancy doors. *Conductor Jakuzure* was waiting for her. Still shuffling along she thanked him, pulled the strap over her shoulder tighter, and headed past dozens of posters and play bills on display in unlit glass cases. While not having a clue why *here* she was in the right place at least.

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"Ma'am I'm sorry but I just don't have any better news! I've poured over every last *byte* of information that exists and it's truly the work of a man who knows he has enemies! Take power for instance. While it's not done everywhere they ran electrical lines occasionally *inside* water pipes! If it wasn't done perfectly it would be a disaster. It's over-engineered but from a defensive point of view to block access to critical system lines with such a shield *is genius*. It will take months if not years of work to build an accurate enough schematic of all fifty floors for us to determine weak points let alone know where the target server even is!"

"We don't have years Inumuta, we have weeks! I want them back *now*. I will not give him even a hair of control over any part of this damn company!"

Satsuki's fist slammed down to rattle everything on her desk. Sighing she eventually lowered her head onto crossed arms and apologized for the outburst. Across from her Houka took off his

glasses to rub his eyes for what must have been the millionth time since he last slept two days ago. Draining the dregs of his mug before setting it down in a safe spot. Gathering himself up to continue.

"Permission to speak freely? *You need it.*"

"*Be my guest.*"

"It's just a measly three percent ownership. This is an affront yes, but it's not strictly speaking *critical*. The five of us were beyond grateful to receive even a single stake in the company each and then more after the buyback, building up nice retirement funds, but even with conceivably *all* twenty percent ownership not held directly by a *Kiryuin* Ryuko alone would have the ability to overrule his decisions with her own *forty percent*—"

"I know that. It's not about the *now*. None of *this* was ever about what's happening now. I don't want him to think he can even hold a *speck* of it, not one single insignificant fraction that could in any way let him so much as even *fathom* of trying to claim *more* when I pass the torch. That bastard only cares about money, *like the rest of the world's current obnoxious owners*, and will seemingly do anything to get it. The world burns for a few months, *hundreds of millions* die, but nothing changed. The more I think about it the more I find myself thinking *I should have threatened him with violence not level conversation...*"

"And for that he would have just sued you for premeditated assault."

"Not if he was sufficiently rendered into an orange topped vegetable physically incapable of even wiping his own ass."

"...Satsuki, no matter how many times you deny it's existence your birthday *is* coming up and you're almost a whopping *twenty-one*. Not exactly an ancient one from times of yore. You have a *significant* amount of time to lay down whatever new *life long plan* you have in motion which is beyond us mere chess pieces—"

"You're not chess pieces. *Not again*. But this needs to be sorted and quickly. And it has to all be done correctly. *There is no room for error*. I need those shares back under contractual control."

"And I'm trying to tell you that short of bribing people who work there to draw us a map which would be just *asking* for the mission to be compromised your time frame is completely unreasonable. Unless you've been hiding the world's most powerful supercomputer already programmed to analyze what little information we have, decipher the structures patterns to determine what's tactically important, and draw up a battle plan fast enough for it to be checked and refined multiple times in days... It can't be done. We cannot create a foolproof plan without knowing all variables."

"*Combat computer that knows tactics... maybe?*"

"...Alright I figure with good odds you've probably squirreled away some resources hidden from everyone in case of emergency, but don't try to tell me you *actually* have one just stuffed into a shoe box in your closet."

Sitting up in her chair again she folded her hands and mentally berated herself.

"No... While I can not confirm nor deny the existence of certain things working behind the scenes, none of those would be directly in such a non-liquid or non-appreciating asset. *But* there is a resource I have been purposefully neglecting. Could you organize the current structural information we have and use it to construct a digital model of the building and surrounding block with each floor separate-able into it's own view? Black and green I think was the color scheme. *Should have tried to pay more attention to it while sitting curled up against her while reading...*"

"Seriously?"

"Very much so."

"That would be child's play. I could do it within an hour and have the most complicated three dimensional puzzle imaginable. It still wouldn't get us closer to mapping any tactical information pertaining to utility, security, and information lines though."

"Not for you or I no... But not everyone. We won't need some god-like military calculating machine to ask a miracle from Houka, *I know a real one to petition for aid directly.*"

"I thought you were set on ensuring she would be completely insulated from our eventual plan of action just in case things went sideways and ended up in court?"

"That I did. But in retrospect... *Never send a battalion to take a hill if a regiment is available.*"

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After passing through one last set of doors she stopped to study walls far beyond any level of opulence she had ever personally been around. Even with Sats on those *stupid industry*

banquets every other month. It was a spacious concert hall that must have easily sat a thousand people. Leather seating rows stretching all the way from front to back separated into sections by red carpeted aisles. Ornate walls filled to capacity with gold statue's and plush viewing boxes going five stories high. Further up the ceiling was a great painted dome filled with classical art and currently lit by a small number of huge chandeliers among the many hanging around, casting portions of the darkened room in a warm golden light. Focusing at the other end she saw a short figure topped with unmistakable pink rearranging dozens upon dozens of metal folding chairs and sheet-music stands under direct stage lights. Great wooden platform itself taking up a whole wall with it's ends flanked by massive red curtains. The walled orchestra pit before it separating potential performers from the audience.

Even trying to stomp her feet to be heard the carpeting and general flooring successfully dampened it to almost nothing as it's designers undoubtedly intended. Any harder would have sent her feet *undoubtedly through it*. So almost two-thirds of the way down she filled her lungs to just yell out a customary greeting.

"Oi! Shortstaa-...ck..."

Her voice had projected cleanly and clearly out into the space, without really echoing back. It wasn't a new phenomenon to her, it was just one she had never expected to experience ever again. Up on stage Nonon stopped, dropped the chair in her hands which made a resounding racket, and spun around with something between astonishment and *unrestrained smiling glee* in her face. She hastily waved Ryuko forward. Pointing to a spot way down the side which had some stairs. Ignoring them she made it to the pit and hopped clear over it onto the stage directly. Shuffling over to talk in a low tone that wouldn't cast out so easily again.

"Well Troll. I'm here. Why the fuck are we... *here?*"

Swinging her arms out Nonon pointed all around them excitedly.

"Because *this* is a proper stage with proper equipment that is actually deserving of use. Especially for *today!*"

"Oh, great. You get to be obnoxious in high quality surround sound."

"Red are we *really* continuing this now?"

"You fucking started it."

"You-... *no*. This is serious."

Walking off to the side she disappeared back stage. Coming back dragging a reinforced steel box on wheels with one hand and

carrying a large black spool of wire over the opposite shoulder. Carefully setting the items down she grabbed a shining gold end to the cable and pulled it toward the front of the stage. Kneeling down she half crawled into a raised box open to their side and plugged it in. Flicking a switch that brought a faint electronic hum that buzzed Ryuko's ears to life. Coming back over she pulled out a pair of white gloves and started fitting them snugly on her hands. Noticing the scowl aimed at her finally.

"What?"

"This you idea of torture now?"

"The fuck are you on about?"

"The noise?"

Stopping herself she stood there straining her own ears. Nodding her head slowly at the very faint static.

"That's just the speaker system warming up, it does that sometimes it'll clear in a minute. Some of them could be replaced with newer models but there's nothing we can do about that now other than *replacing it with proper notes.*"

Ensuring that both gloves were on she fished some keys out of her pocket. Crouching down to undo the four locks holding the box together. Swinging the lid open she set it down on the stage and pulled out a block of black foam to reveal it's contents.

"Hand restored by the best master luthier I could bring into the country, one of the guys who originally built them himself! So many calls to get in contact with him and then *many* more all over to find authentic furniture and knobs, but there was one thing everyone who took an interest agreed on. The original electronic heart you know still beats, just re-soldered. It was in real bad need of a tune up Red. A lot of miles were on this thing and it's been a hell of a rebuild. It's been cataloged extensively by a team of archivists from Hamamatsu, carefully dismantled, thoroughly cleaned, majority of the original paint *saved* with some miracle glue removal and restoration, and finally reassembled by hand while a group of us got the privilege to watch."

Reverently she pulled the guitar half out of it's surrounding protective felt to catch the lights from above. She almost dropped it when Ryuko's case slid off her shoulder and hit the floor. She was about to go on a tirade of shrieking to *watch it* until she looked up. Staring into the large gray hood she could make out heavy eyes deep in thought glued to the item in her hands. *Of course it would hit her.*

"Well?"

Snapping back to the present Ryuko found herself in front of a kneeling Nonon holding the thing up to her like a sword.

"W-What?"

"Take it. Someone needs to find out if all the effort was successful and it works."

"What do you mean *if it works?*"

"I mean no one has even plucked a string on it yet."

"...*Why?*"

"Because it's *yours?*"

"And this isn't just some way of putting a cattle prod or some shit in my hands?"

"Red... why in the actual fuck would I do that!?"

"I don't know why you do shit you offensive little asshole! Why here, why now, why... *All of this!*"

"This is a proper stage, everything's ready to go, and you need to be the one who plays it."

"You're the one obsessed with the thing, why aren't you doing it?"

"B-Because it wouldn't be right! This is *your* guitar. Your voice. Fucking legitimately! The original frontal panel was hard core studied to find how many sets of different gouges were on it's surface, and there were only *two*. One very shallow and short, and one deep enough to feel and see! You're by some act of god the only person who's played this thing for real. You are the one that needs to reclaim it. *Reclaim yourself.*"

"It's j-just a f-fucking instrument."

"Deep down it's a part of who you are, *and you know it.*"

"And how would you know what is!?"

"Why are you here?"

"...What?"

"Why the fuck are you here?"

"Don't change the subject!"

"I'm not. Why did you come here with your old case. You could have

just fucked off and done I don't know what instead. But no, you actually showed up. *Why?*"

"I don't know... you had shit for me--"

"And that's all?"

"I d-don't know!"

"You do."

"No I d-don't! Fucking fiber damn it!"

"If that was all *Then why won't you take it?*"

"I-..."

"Stop suppressing yourself. If you want to walk away and silence yourself forever take this fucker and smash it over my god damn head. No holding back! Prove you don't care!"

"Fucking fine!"

Ripping her hood off she unzipped her outer layer and shrugged it off. Wiping water and surprise sweat off her hands with it before tossing it onto the closest chair that nearly toppled from the force. Grabbing the guitar's neck she hoisted it up to grab like an executioners ax. Anger in her eyes, annoyed from the insistence that *the- the piece of shit* was worth something to her, she locked onto the determined woman still kneeling on the stage waiting for her to act. Putting force into her arms she brought it up over her head in a motion to bring it back down edge first. Aiming squarely for her nose.

In her swing senses burned alive, slowing the world around her. She could see the drop of nervous sweat rolling down Nonon's throat as she swallowed, bracing herself. She could now see the thing itself coming down past her line of sight as it arced. Lights dazzling one by one as they cast off new strings and chrome fittings. Thousands of individual memories flashing to life in brief explosions within her mind at each and every one. The farther it went the farther back her recollections.

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It was pouring. She was half frozen in the autumn air and stumbling along an empty street with her eyes stuck pointing firmly down at socks and shoes caked in mud. She didn't need to see where she was going. It didn't matter.

She'd been walking for hours into the night by then, and her face was not wet from the rain.

She had run to get away from the empty dorms choking the air in her lungs with the stillness.

From the phone call that never came.

Every break, every vacation, and every extended period of time off parents and guardians were supposed to come bring their children home. That was the rules at Ox. It was a mandatory thing.

That is until the child was ten.

They weren't exactly what anyone could call close, but even then she'd still gotten the same treatment. When she was younger he had been far too busy with his work and left her to her own devices for the most part. Which was fine, she enjoyed the freedom to run around the wooded grounds everyday as soon as she could walk and study the little pond out back filled with tiny life. And while she detested being dumped into this school full of children that did nothing more than attempt to mock her for looking different as small children tend to do she would still be brought home in a rickety old car that never failed to climb the hills the family home was located in. He even sat down with her and gently helped her learn a little about what he did for a living when she was old enough, and insistent enough, to manage sharp objects.

At least so she thought at the time.

She otherwise never heard a bedtime story. Never praised for defeating some imagined foe with valor and the aid of a trusty twig. Never got a laugh from him, except on her birthdays.

It was still usually a quiet occasion, he was always the quiet sort, but he would bring her to the pastry shop a few kilometers down the road and let her have any one little cake available. And he would smile and laugh as they shared it under the sky, or inside the glass sitting room in the back of the house if conditions were not right for enjoying the outdoors.

But whenever she had to go back to school, go back to the ridicule and ire of the others that despised her birthmarks, he had never promised to be able to see her again. He was a busy man who tried his hardest to make sure he got enough time to spend such an important occasion with her every year, and it was always left unsaid that the underlying reality was he had to make the time to see her.

Last year he was late.

She turned ten yesterday.

She didn't get a ride home.

Somewhere inside she knew the day might come, she had just refused to believe it. Believe the assholes. Until it happened.

The other kids had pretty much never seen her dad due to his general absence. Never stopping by, never sending letters. They always tried to call her the orphan, the *abandoned child* as her stupid name could be twisted into. She had defended herself physically from such accusations and insults. But now she couldn't exactly deny their words.

She was officially alone.

And it hurt.
Deeply.

So there she was trying to figure out what to do with herself now that she was completely alone when she came across an odd scene. Tucked in an alleyway away from the rain was a curious collection of items with a hand written sign for the garbage collectors stating the pile was all trash. But it didn't look like the usual black bagged filth. It was a number of instruments stacked and set against a dumpster. Drawn in with curiosity she poked around the sea of worn brown wood until she reached the other side. There resting behind the dumpster on it's own away from the rest of the pile was a red guitar that caught her eye.

It was about as long as she was tall and it looked like who ever had tossed it had never cared for the state of it. Caked in dust, strings rusted from disuse, and scratches from who knows what kind of storage. She picked it up anyway. Wiping off the mess with her hands to find the still shiny paint beneath. Fingering the strings corrosion rubbed off revealing it was still solidly shiny. Usable. It was there she wiped her tears away. Taking off her school provided yellow jacket to wrap it in she used her strength gained in fights to hold the thing's strap away from her chest, pinning the bundle to her back, and ran. Running as fast as her legs could carry her back to the student dorms currently devoid of others. Devoid of staff who barely cared about anyone in the first place.

Sitting on her bed while her clothes hung up to dry and listening to the room's only provided amenity, an old radio, she decided she wouldn't sit and cry like a wimp. If dad wouldn't teach her any more about strings, she would play her own strings.

She didn't need him.

Didn't need anyone.

It sounded mute without a speaker setup, but when others came back to the dorms she was allowed to keep her *self gotten gift*. Everyday she listened to her little radio and plucked away.

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She acted on instinct when a single noise reached her ears. It hadn't been loud enough for even Nonon to hear from millimeters right under it, but it might as well have been a screaming crack of thunder in her mind that paralyzed her.

A creak from one of the screws holding neck to body.

She'd only heard it once before. In a drunken fit of rage against her life, her bastard father, and at herself sitting alone on the dirty floor of a motel room in October yet again paid for by performing for the same assholes that would just call her a freak or slut in the street. It's what they all did.

Abandoned for another full year *again* she'd felt the overwhelming need to just destroy something. *Anything*. And her unfortunate guitar had been the first thing within reach as it tended to be on or near her at all times. It was that same noise that had stopped her from destroying it then that stopped her in a whirlwind of inexplicable emotion now. Another millisecond and it would have splintered into dust on impact along with Nonon's skull. To the pinkette's credit she was still sitting there, eyes open, staring at her.

Slowly Ryuko brought the thing back away from a pink head. Releasing her death grip on it's neck to get a proper hold of the thing so she could properly study it. Turning it over while watching herself, now older and fully developed, in a mirror shine similar to the one she had always spent too much money on maintaining back when the paint had still been uncovered. Before she covered it. When she just spent hours on end sitting alone and singing to herself on the roof of the dorms. Without even thinking about it she swung the strap over her neck and flipped the guitar over to look at it's back. Knot in her gut only unraveling after finding the material un-cracked. Ignoring Nonon as she shakily got up and continued whatever it was she was doing in a background quickly blurring out of focus yet again.

"Yer on in fifteen *Drifter*, don't be late."

"Shut up Ito, I haven't been paid yet and I expect it all to be ready in full when I'm done."

"And I still expect you to put on a good show so we make that money as usual. Bottles on the table."

"Not gonna bother me about being *coherent* tonight?"

"You shittin me? They'll be here all night spending money if you go out there more than tipsy and start throwing those pleats around."

"That a request?"

"Nah the musics damn fine. Just a *suggestion* that you might use to make some more pay."

"*Creep*."

"It's business ya overpriced punk jailbait. You're lucky I allow your ass in here at all let alone allowing you to drink. *On the house occasionally no less*."

"Fuck off. I don't need to hang around your stage, plenty of others to chose from."

"H-Hey! Let's not get hasty now... j-just use that people magic ya got on the crowd alright?"

It was the standard arrangement for a Friday night like the many before it over the past year. When anyone else from the stupid middle school was on the way home, she was sitting in one of many smoked up backstage dressing rooms waiting. Slipping off her perch on an old wardrobe against the back wall she went across the room to the inner doorway. Pushing through a curtain to grab a six-pack left for her on the table out front behind a real door and drag it back to a table her case was sitting on. Taking a seat she occasionally stole glimpses at the other women in the room near it's large mirror bank changing into various *outfits* for the night shift while downing the first two bottles of cheap beer. The drinks made her hands steady, the view of changing waitresses and *performers* made her face warm. Both of which were completely necessary to maximize tips, which would make up half of her pay, which would give her enough money to live through the next week at least. Weekends always brought more money, especially the sleazy

joints that were willing to headline her with whatever usual band right before the *acts*.

Running through her last minute mental checklist she started drinking from the third and final bottle for now. Popping her case open she snatched up her companion's strap with one hand. Turning it over to give it's important parts a once over with a smile.

They were alike in many ways. Tossed aside by whomever had been in charge of them, no one ever came looking for them after letting them go, and until they were together on stage no one had anything nice to say about them whatsoever. *The odd looking freak and her broken guitar*. But she'd survived being dropped into adulthood. Taken the hard road head held high. And when she needed to feed herself it had defied it's looks to be more reliable than anyone she had ever met. It had never let her down while using the only constructive thing she was seemingly good at besides violence to support herself on the only stages that would have her.

It had started it's life as a proper guitar and after getting kicked to the curb was now in the hands of a *little shithead* singing before prostitutes. Plastered in stickers that formed an urban camouflage that made it easier to slink off into dark corners and jump fences. Made them slightly less visible on stage.

Hearing the opening act for the night starting to wind down she got up. Carefully throwing strap over her shoulder she headed for the door. Steeling herself for the environment, apologizing to her companion for dragging it into the same filthy mess.

"Hey... Hey!"

"H-Huh?"

Shaking her mind clear yet again today she noticed through bleary eyes that every chair besides the one she had *appropriated* were now in neat semi-circular rows. Short woman before her holding the other end to the cable from earlier and actually looking concerned at her blankly staring at a small splattering of salt water on the floor while hugging the instrument to her chest. Voice broken.

"W-What?"

"That's twice in like the last ten minutes you've just stopped and looked like a deer in headlights. And you're crying. You need a minute?"

"The f-fuck's it matter to you!?"

"What the fuck do you mean *what's it matter*, I'm trying to help you."

"...*Why?*"

"It's not a fucking crime is it?"

"Why do you give a single fuck? Satsuki's doin damn fine if that's what you're after. You don't need to put up some bullshit to wrench that out--"

"*For the love of-* I am currently only trying to help you, you dense- *no... no. We're getting somewhere.* Why do you *think* I'm going through all of *this*."

"*T-This* being?"

"Going through all the hell it's been to figure out where you've been, what you are on the inside, where *your* instrument ended up, all the legwork to get that thing into better than brand new condition after learning what *it* really was, and putting in a lot of thought into the whole situation which led to pushing back my own orchestra's practice session until noon so that *I* can put *you* on the single best stage in this city. All because you need to be here."

"And why do I specifically need to be in this overpriced dump? I already *gave a performance* for Eyebrow's sake when you s-shoved t-this shi-... th-... *thing* back into my face and thought I was a whore or something--"

"Excuse you I did not for a second say you were a whore."

"*Bullshit.*"

"You were slinging a guitar, not your ass around a pole. Typically being able to use a real talent that's not *dick sucking* to survive is pretty indicative of *not dick sucking for a living*. You're fucking crying after seeing the thing in one piece. You care for it. You physically can't bring yourself to destroy it even if it meant breaking my neck into the floor because it's like trying to kill a part of yourself, *right?* Because it's a part of the you on the inside."

"It's n-not a stupid part of me it's... w-we're... it was all *performances*."

"My turn to call *bullshit*."

"And what would you know huh! Why the fuck are you so Fiber damn fucking persistent? I could have killed you right there--"

"But you didn't. And I'm fairly sure it's not because you were worried about my safety. I've heard you let your heart roll free off the tongue in earnest Ryuko, especially after the second time I could tell. There's a significant difference between just a *performer* and an *artist*, and there's not a single chance in fucking hell you're one of the former. And in my own field *I'm never wrong*. If you hug it any harder it will snap by the way."

Looking down she reflexively gave it some more space. Fixing the sling properly she wanted to frown down at it so hard. Break it over her knee and forget the flood coming back to her. But she just couldn't do it. She couldn't will her hands to even scratch it. Not with how much she owes it. So she just wiped her eyes.

"When all else fails you the musics there, right? A vent for your feelings. It's just what you do, especially when you stop bottling all the shit from the day, month, *whatever* up and *let it out*. Decompress. Not *act* or, or *sell your words* or whatever crap you keep trying to justify why you walked away from *this* with. From expressing yourself in the manner you learned that you could at some point. I don't care what language it's in, what genre, *you make it sound god damn beautiful because you mean it*. You can't teach that. Can't bring it out of *anybody*. It comes from a place deep down. A place you need to find on your own. One most people will *never* find. *Some don't have...* I call it talent. Which I know sounds like it encompasses a lot of shit yeah, not the least of which is how fucking good you are with handling your fingers over what I assume to be a lifetime of using them, but also... the intangible. You didn't start playing to make money. No. You're not even remotely the type. You started because you wanted to find yourself *and I'd say you hit the jackpot*."

Looking up she saw the gold tipped cable held before her. Determined individual still holding it patiently. She was an *asshole*, a *smug bitch*, and a *shrill shrieking annoyance*. But... Thinking back. Back to simple days. Starving days surviving on what she could swipe from anywhere while school was out. When she decided she needed a roof over her head but scrounged up enough money from not very legal ways to properly carry her guitar instead. In her free time it was the only thing she could sit and do for free and it needed to be protected. Defended from anyone trying damage it or hurt her. The Troll wasn't wrong. She wasn't filling her words with her ego today.

"When did you start playing?"

"Ten."

"Working?"

"...Thirteen."

"I rest my case. But that was then, this is now. You were so close last time, but I fucked up. You were still in denial and I pushed too fast. I'm sorry. I will say it again though. You did what you had to. It hurt you. But you survived, cause that's what you do. And to do it you turned your instrument into a garish caricature of itself then tried to walk away from the poison you tried to concentrate in it. Blaming it. But you can't walk away from that or yourself. On your own you still held on even if you didn't know it. *Which is good!* I can throw money, time, and people into fixing a guitar. I can't do the same for you if you had chosen to stop visiting that place deep down inside that's vulnerable. *That's extremely difficult to salvage if it breaks.* Satsuki had the right idea I guess. What I *can* do is give you the missing piece of your voice back as it used to be. A blank slate, give you the space to use it, and... tell you that you'll feel better once you let the pain go and get back into the rhythm. You've as far as I can tell accepted it back. Please don't push it away again."

She stood there thinking. Silent. Searching the shorter woman for anything resembling a lie or insincerity. But her heart was steady. Her eyes solidly fixed staring up at her own unwavering. She had no idea what to say, but she didn't have to when Nonon did the last thing she expected. The last thing she could think of in desperation. She clicked her shoes together and bowed at the waist. One arm flat to her side the other still holding the cable out.

"Ryuko-sama I beg you, please. I've been there. I've been hurt. I know how you might think and I promise you that this will help! If you won't on my account, then do it for Satsuki. *S-She just wants you to be whole again as well.*"

She was floored. Left blinking, waiting for Nonon to jump back and do something. Insult her. Anything. But nothing came. She stood there as she was waiting. So tentatively Ryuko took the thing in hand and turned to face the room. Woman behind her nearly jumping for joy afterward. Outright running around to make sure everything was working. Plugging it in Ryuko noticed a microphone stand placed before her. Pink tornado of activity disappearing somewhere backstage again before her world filled with lights. Staring up she was biologically blocking out the blistering heat of the dozen spotlights now aimed squarely at her feet, but they came with a familiar blinding field that made her feel enclosed.

The old weight was in her hands.

An electronic ear ready to spread her words to the wind.

It was an image she had briefly held for herself as a kid. Even made her own band logo she still wore as a personal embroidered

flag of the *Kanto Drifter*. Her old jacket. She first tightened strings by feel then one by one she plucked them. Standing there listening to the noises that returned from speakers coming alive and slightly adjusted the pegs appropriately. It was a simple thing, but she couldn't stop the small smile from forming as the notes came back to sound like they did so many years ago. Not on small stages, but before then sitting next to a salvaged amp giddy as a schoolgirl could be after hiding it in her closet for weeks waiting until a break to bring it out without getting reprimanded.

Done with prep she thought about her fingers. To the surprise of her sole audience member coming back out she let her guards down. Pale fingers were inspected as the heat from above now burned her skin. Swallowing anxiety down she knew very well that this thing had steel strings. She knew that she didn't play with a pick. And knew she was about to be in a world of pain. But it was naturally something she had to do of course and she would turn out fine.

She'd done it before after all.

Moving hands into position she could have sworn she saw a small mass out of the corner of her eye somewhere beyond the ceiling smiling at her for being honest with herself. She suppressed the urge to call him an asshole for butting into her head without warning. Traces of his existence only popping up when she seemingly was at her weakest. Instead she smiled and grit her teeth for the first few chords. Powering through she closed her eyes and continued on. Going song by song through anything she'd learned or picked up.

And it hurt like hell. But she didn't stop. Didn't sputter and cry. *Ryuko Matoi was not going to be a wimp.*

She had her own strings to play with.

Taking a seat on stage Nonon closed her eyes and let herself drift along. Confirming her original prognosis, and very relieved that she was still breathing after coming face to face with the wall of denial. The risk had been worth it, after all.

Ryuko really did have pipes to die for.

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Stepping outside she couldn't stop the shaking in her legs. She felt light. Weird. But not in a bad way. Maybe it was from basically playing a four hour solo concert. Or maybe shorty

was right. Said short woman uncharacteristically held her tongue while walking Ryuko through the damp air to her car. Even after they reached it and she safely strapped her case reunited with it's contents into the passenger seat she was still riding that high, but got her voice back to answer questions.

"How are you feeling?"

"Fingers healed, fully protected again. Still fucking stings. *Fucking fiber why did I do that...*"

"Don't pussy out on me now, you're a human tank. But how are you *feeling.*"

"I-... My heart won't slow down... *F-Few things do that nowadays...*"

"Cause you finally fucking let it out. It was going stir crazy on you and now it's finally stretching it's legs. Few huh? *Satsuki~?*"

Sitting in the drivers seat sideways her feet were crossing on the pavement. Looking up at Nonon who half turned to study the momentary partings among the clouds.

"*Frequently.* You know you still never answered, why did you do this?"

"I already told you Red. Helping you. That's kinda... *important.*"

"But, *why?*"

"...She never told you?"

"Eyebrows?"

"Yeah."

"Something about not seeing shit and her usual brand of being vague without trying cause that's just how she talks occasionally."

"*Heh...* Yeah she does that. Look, I gotta get back and round up all those star struck assholes we walked past back into shape so we can be ready for next month-"

Turning on her heel she tried to walk off with her hands in her pockets. Stopped when a single red string wrapped itself around her stomach to hold her in place just a step away from the car.

"Oi. There's more to this than that."

"And? I already told you-"

"Something happened between you and Brows at some point, didn't it?"

She stopped trying to move.

"I *get* that I don't know *jack and shit* about this kinda junk. Fuck I didn't see the whole fuckin deal Mako was havin with the giant until they were k-kissing each other... *Kinda sucked but t-that's whatever*. I'd like to think I'm not *that* blind to how people work. You're the only one that almost never calls her *Sama*. And you're the one she *trusts*. And you say you've been hurt... Why?"

"...I was her first lieutenant... I vowed to protect her life. Her happiness. The war's over but if you haven't noticed the four of us never officially retired. Not like you and her. If that means making sure you're okay so be it. W-We're still doing our jobs, simple as that."

"It's more than that. *Heartss picking up rather fasst...*"

"*Right, human polygraph... Of course you know that... Can't lie to a Kiryuin*. Alright Red. Fine! You want the truth..."

Turning around she stepped back over to stare uncomfortably close down into the gray hood leaning against a seat. *Damn perfect eyes* open wide studying her in their unnerving unblinking manner.

"H-Hey personal space--"

"I confessed to her. I loved her. And she shot me down like a stone without a second thought. But I was fine with that. I understood. She had no time to think of such a *trivial* thing as *feelings*. She didn't have any. Didn't need them. *Now I know why... but it still hurt to know some of that even back then*. Her heart was broken, smashed into a billion little fucking pieces so that Aunt *y Ragyo* couldn't grab it and crush it herself. She turned herself into a military wind up doll stuck on a single path with no room whatsoever for deviation or distraction. And you know what happened? Your ass showed up and everything went to hell."

"But--"

"Because you looked kinda like her with a dash of extra discomilf to boot. *Shocker there*. You were kinda hot in that rebellious punk kinda way on top of all that. *And then* you only ever wore fucking miniskirts and suspender nipple belts strapping- *what the fuck even are you a quadruple D? Size of your fucking face- forget it-* didn't help. Bottom line you were god-damn attractive. You're still eleven kinds of knock out out of ten. I grew a fucking crush. On you."

"B-Bu- Wha- a-... e-eh?... *Eh!?*"

"You heard me you drop dead gorgeous asshole! I ignored it, stayed focused on the mission. But then your fire bomb of an ass turned out to be competent enough to be *on her level*. Was it *that* that made her wet herself thinking about you, or was it the flying vitriol and hormones that came from sword fighting each other in sentient combat thongs I don't know! Shit you two could keep an army of psychologists busy for several lifetimes figuring out how the fuck you two function as people, but none of that actually matters. The how or why is completely and utterly irrelevant because it turned out you were just the blast furnace needed to finally melt the pile of broken glass inside Satsuki's chest back into something resembling a human heart. She fell in love with you before *I think* she even knew what the fuck real love even was. She was completely head over heels *obsessed with you*. And you might have never openly said anything but you were also getting *real fucking physically close* at every opportunity.

The writing was on the wall. You two were gonna be a *thing* somewhere at sometime down the road if we all survived the shitstorm. And for that I personally *hated the fuck out of you*. I was jealous. You got her love. Which was really fucking mental because somewhere deep down I still wanted to fuck *the hell* out of you too and wrote fucking smutty doujins about you two... But... But you are wholly responsible for her coming back around to opening up to people which is something none of us who were with her could have claimed was possible... Which is why when she wanted you, I never let that crush become love and bowed out. Sat on the sidelines just happy to watch the little bonfire of love kindle to life. When she *needed you* and was completely and utterly *out of her depth* I stepped in. Got tired of sitting on my ass watching the slow dumpster fire you two called flirting play out over the most agonizingly long two fucking years of my life. And it made me so god damn sick to my stomach with how utterly *hopeless* you both were at figuring out what to do, so I orchestrated the single most fucked up thing I have ever done which was date rape two reunited sisters into fucking each other hard enough to make them realize that they were both *DTF* and should just fucking get the fuck on with fucking each other senseless already and live happily ever after. The end."

Now leaning in under the car's door she was huffing with a need for air. Pointing an accusatory finger down at the woman crushed down into her seat with not even a rough idea of what to process first. How to even *respond* to that. After waiting for that response Nonon realized how on the spot that probably was and why they could be waiting there for days before she would get a reply out of her. So she sighed and stood back up straight.

"I want you two to be happy because in your own *special ways* you're irresistible people that when together make a damn beautiful mess. Like the world's most interesting nature preserve. And it's fucking adorable sometimes watching you two figure out

how to do shit. Ensuring you are not fucking yourself over on the inside is just another part of helping *the odd couple* figure out life. We're all friends. And I just want to ensure that there's no baggage holding you down from being who you really want to, and so you can be the best *damn-lesbian-waifu-shirt-person-thing shoulder to lean on* you can be for that magnificent person I will respect and serve until the day I die. *I'm gonna stop rambling now...*"

Leaning down into the car she hugged Ryuko. Only smiling when hands finally reached around and patted her on the back.

"You... *That...* a lot."

"Yes. And I'm completely fine with the status quo. Just... please treat her well, don't try to stop being yourself *again*, and wear some fucking pants once in a while. Jesus *you're d-distracting.*"

Standing back up out of the car she shoved her still gloved hands back into her pockets. Both parties blushing for different reasons.

"Sooo... that hug never happened right?"

"Y-Yeah... *Yeah.*"

"Good. *good.* Truce?"

"You're the one that started the name callin."

"And I'm ending it. There was more to you than I thought. I'm sorry."

"*Shit* and here I thought this morning that out of anyone we'd never get sappy. Are we gonna start painting nails and bullshitin about hot chicks too?"

"No. I'd offer to go bar hopping and do shots, but you could reasonably drink the entire Russian army under the table. And you have a girl. *The best one.*"

"...*I know.*"

"Besides, do you even know how to paint nails anything other than black~?"

"I've never painted anything. So no."

"...Never?"

"I worked in a fucking borderline brothel when I was thirteen to feed myself, does that *sound* like someone who had the time or

money to fuck around with nail polish?"

"...I... *Right*. You know what... We could go buy you some sometime... I guess... Satsuki could show you how. She knows. Make a date of it for you two. A warm fire nearby, maybe some fresh cappuccinos..."

"Do you *normally* just set up dates for other people? Cause this is sounding like a trend with you..."

"Yes?"

"The *fuck*?"

"Everyone's got hobbies Red. That's why I go bar hopping. You find people of all kinds and then from afar see who should be with who. Is it fucking with people? Maybe. I don't actually *do anything* unless they are *obviously* trying and failing to work something out themselves. Like *you two*."

"*That's still fucked*. whatever. *Truce*. You do shit like that again though and I will punt your rib cage out your mouth."

"Don't have to, you've already become a self sustaining reaction. My work is done. Just *uh*, if you ever want to play with a group you have my number. Sing for her sometimes, she wants to hear you more often... Wh-... Why do you smell like laundry?"

"Hair's pretty much thread... *Satsuki likes it soft... Softener gets used. By her*. Now I might have heard things wrong but *what was that about doujins?*"

Looking down Nonon saw the red thread was still there connecting her to the figure peaking out from the gray tent around her head. And only one thought came to mind.

Fuck.

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.
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"I believe that covers everything for today."

"And not a minute over projected time."

"Efficiency is important milady. I was informed your schedule

would be tight today."

"Oh? By?"

"The Mistress of course Lady Satsuki. Your work day ends at six on the dot today as was requested. I bid you a pleasant evening."

"*MmmHmm... Likewise Hoomaru. Somethings in motion then. Best not make her wait.*"

Briefcase in hand she left her office and bid the various employees that crossed her path to the elevators similar acknowledgments. Leaving the closing up in the capable hands of her subordinates she waited until the doors opened with a ding. Entering it her eyebrows crashed downwards when the they closed behind her moments sooner than calibrated. Cautiously she stepped over to the control panel and punched in for the ground floor. While the machine started moving downward normally the whole control surface flickered to life. Over it the display was now corrupted, spitting out a jumbled mess of pixels instead of numbers. Picking out the rustle of metal from above she half turned to look over her shoulder at the emergency hatch in the ceiling. Hand in her briefcase only relaxing around the emergency knife handle when the intruder responsible for this act dropped in.

Black boots thunked as she landed. Standing up she wiped dust off a black plaid skirt. Hands settling on a gray waistline slung low like the shorts they had replaced. Upwards her torso was about the same as that morning except the addition of a red scarf slung back over both shoulders. Lower half of her face covered by the material, hair finally down. One blue gear winking at her before the elevator stopped with a groan.

"Ryuko?"

Reaching up with her right Satsuki finally noticed a single vibrant red strand retract from the hole in the ceiling down into Ryuko's arm. With the same hand she pulled material off her face to give a smile.

"Just to double check you are done yeah?"

"Yes? How did you stop this thing? Just what are you doing? Why the scarf?"

"Magic bullshit, you'll find out, and disguise."

"Disguise?"

"Yup!"

"For?"

"Where we're going for the evenin."

"You intend to go out *like that*?"

"No I got my jacket stashed to pick up. I intend for *both of us* to."

"Ryuko--"

"Nu uh. No complainin. *I'm cashing in.*"

Satsuki stood there thinking while the elevator now headed for some new unknown destination. Staring at her for several floors worth of travel until finally sighing.

"My word's only good so long as it's kept. Starting now I presume?"

"Now."

Stepping forward her hand delved into Satsuki's suit jacket to dig out her phone. Briefly giving her chest a squeeze before it was successfully found. She muted it and sunk it down into her chest to rest beside her own.

"I can't just be out of contact--"

"*Oh yes you can~.* We won't be long anyways."

Any further inquiries were ignored with more smiles. When the elevator finally came to a stop again it's doors didn't open.

"Last stop, everybody off! *Eyebrows first.*"

"How?"

"Why *up* of course."

"Are you *suggesting* I climb out the hatch?"

"Do you see any other holes in the ceiling? If I can fit through there so can you."

Staring upward she shook her head before shoving her briefcase into Ryuko's hands. Stepping back against the door to make the most of available space she shoved off. Kicking herself off the opposite wall to get her arms over the top. Legs free hanging she muscled her upper body up into the darkness. Pleasantly surprised to find the top of the elevator significantly cleaner than anticipated. Further climbing was eased by a helping push from below both her feet to get them up. Standing up in the darkness she looked around to find some space. Making room for Ryuko to hop

up, kick the door closed, and plant a heel on either side of the thing.

"It would have been more efficient for you to have jumped up first then pulled me afterward if you were so intent on getting us here."

"Well, *yeah*. But then I wouldn't get the best view in the house."

"You made me crawl out of an elevator... just to stare up my skirt?"

"Nah, that's just a bonus."

"...Ryuko if it's something you want me to do on a normal day just *ask*. If it's feasible and or reasonable *I will try to do it...*"

"*Uh...* L-Later. This way."

"This way *where*, this is an elevator shaft. Flanked by more shafts. It's pitch black and a sheer drop of both sides—"

"*This* way."

Letting her hair's glow come alive to full golden power Ryuko was standing over the door side of the platform. Gesturing into a square opening half a meter below the bottom of the doors for the floor above them.

"There's a couple maintenance shafts running through every floor. This one covers our first stop."

"Why do you know this?"

"Fastest way to get from place to place without being stopped is the back ways through the building. Now come on we have a schedule to stick to."

Stepping off the metal platform and into the cramped passageway she followed Ryuko into the darkness. Carefully inspecting the dozens of offshoots and vent grills that they passed.

"So *this* is how you just pop up from place to place?"

"Trade secret reveled out of necessity."

"Why?"

"We can't be seen walking around this place as everyone's leaving or someone could identify us after the fact."

"We're going somewhere public?"

"Very. Here we are."

In the middle of a long stretch surrounded by wires, pipes, and other various utilities they stopped next to a square offshoot with a metal hatch in the floor. Propping it open she dropped down into a dark room beneath. Lights coming on seconds later. Peering down Satsuki could see hundreds of cloth bolts in various colors and patterns on racks before gracefully falling into Ryuko's waiting arms. Set down she continued to study the room, including a lack of ceiling.

"Where are we exactly?"

"My supply room."

"Why is there a significant lack of material above us?"

"So if anyone comes in they don't get suspicious about there being just one spot open under a metal grate. Come on Sats, we need to dress you down."

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Through one last door was Ryuko's office. Stepping out onto a walkway that surrounded the open two-story room she hopped over it's railing. Blonde head disappearing into the cloth forest hanging from the ceiling. Moving down to the floor via a ladder Satsuki slowly brushed past the curtains formed by hundreds of various hanging fabrics and items into a reasonably sized open space hidden in the middle. Guide standing next to a large drafting table at it's center populated by a mound of items. Future runway designs strung up on rigging above their heads in various stages of construction scattering light from specifically requested natural-light bulbs above.

"Alrighty. Purple, blue, or black?"

She pointed upward with concern and a raised eyebrow.

"Eh? Oh, Nooo. Those would be way too much. Which... I w-wouldn't mind if you wanted to give them a go in private but *uh* that could take some restitching to fit yer *proportions* and that would bring way too many eyeballs going in. No, we're tryin to make you look less conspicuous."

Bending over she leaned onto the table to dig into the pile. Laughing when she felt a frustrated attempt at both pulling her skirt back down or tucking her underwear's straps out of sight from behind. Bringing herself back up with a pair of jeans in hand she tossed it backward over her shoulder. Backing up a few steps to catch it Satsuki turned over the patched up garment. Confusion

mounting when a pair of shirts was pressed to her chin one after the other.

"Look up, *yup*. Definitely not purple. Blue it is."

Tossing the t-shirt at her it was caught with her other hand, leaving nothing but her face to catch a jacket also thrown in her direction. Voice muffled by it.

"Imouto I am not a coat rack, and this smells like mothballs."

"It's just from a surplus store, it's been cleaned. Now come on Nee-san you need to change."

"What's wrong with my suit?"

"It's a fucking suit, you're gonna look too much like a fish out of water. It's gonna be the exact opposite of what's needed."

"Which is?"

"Just hurry up they close in three hours and we need to be there before they start taking inventory check for the night."

Shaking the green military item off her head she looked around for a chair or some other place to temporarily hold things.

"I need a--"

Turning toward Ryuko a trio of thin lines were waiting near her. Courtesy the figure now sitting on her table and kicking her boots against it.

"...Thank you."

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"You couldn't have included a belt?"

"I didn't think you'd need one. Mine's too thick to fit in your loops. Just let them sit lower and you'll be fine."

"It's not *fine*."

"Eyebrows you're wearing a jacket that goes all the way down your butt just don't bend down and you won't whale tail."

"Is that what you call what you do on occasion? Including a bit of this morning."

"No that's when the full T-back rides up. I just let side straps up to *show off the handiwork*."

Turning another corner they had covered a fair distance on foot after sneaking out a security tunnel from central to avoid notice. Golden blonde head currently leaning against her shoulder and quietly directing them to their destination.

"You seem to be in an unusually good mood."

"The *uh* war is over."

"...You actually made peace with her?"

"She wanted a truce, up to her ass if she keeps it."

"Good gods above what *happened* today?"

"She gave me... my *old* guitar back. Holdup. I forgot you'll need these."

Unlinking arms in a quiet corner of the sidewalk Ryuko put a hand down her old jacket to pull out a pair of glasses. Discretely clearing the lenses with some spit and a fiber wipe she carefully pushed the glass and wire item onto Satsuki's face. Tucking another bit of hair back behind her ear and under her ball cap.

"There. Now you probably look different enough than yer usual public apperance."

"When did you swipe my reading glasses?"

"Had to go back home to shower, change, then hit up the bank."

"...Why?"

"So the *cash money* doesn't directly have our name on it."

"Ryuko the closer we get the more this sounds like you're attempting to make me buy something illicit."

"No. Completely legal. It would just be... awkward, *at best*, to buy."

"And why would that be, is it something embarrassing? *Sexual in nature*?"

"Not *directly*... It's just that the guys working the counter, they know my voice. At least I'm like *ninety-nine* percent sure they do. And I can't buy it without them knowing it's me, and thanks to *you* it wouldn't be hard to connect the dots to... *Us as a whole*."

"What have *I* done?"

Walking along again she subtly directed Satsuki's view toward a rack of magazines just inside a convenience store. Pulling the lenses down her nose to clear the distant blur from her non-prescription attempt at saving her eyesight for as long as possible.

"*Oh. Those.*"

More than one had a familiar pair of gear'd blue bedroom eyes staring back. Never anything below the neck though. Not after the one time the three minds behind the *Kiryuin corporation* were on one cover.

"That reminds me I have letters for you in my briefcase."

"More fluffed up photo shoot bullshit?"

"Might be. I haven't read them. It is *your* mail after all. So what else happened today?"

"We talked, she apologized for shit, she's fucking nuts about other people's relationships... *S-She t-thinks I'm hot...*"

"*Ahh.*"

"What the fuck, that makes sense to you!?"

"The aggression?"

"Yeah."

"It's common to mask unwanted feelings of attraction with anger and disdain. *Such as yourself for those first few months...*"

"...I had legit reasons to kick your ass."

"I know. *Too many reasons for one person to fight the world frankly...*"

"Hey you said it. It worked out. R-Right?"

"You've been wronged many times, we will right as many as we can including our current mission to Osaka."

"Got a date finally?"

"Not yet. I need to go over some things with you in private though."

"H-How private?"

"Business private, not *bedroom private*. Probably."

"Oh. Never mind, we're here."

Moving to the side of foot traffic they had come to a window plastered in advertisements of electronics. While the majority to her was nothing of importance it was the handful of semi-familiar ones that piqued her interest. Now up close to the glass Ryuko directed her to look past the front counter and at the display cases lining the left wall.

"O-Okay. So they are going to recognize me the second I open my mouth, but probably not what I look like without a hard look. So once we're inside you will do all the talking."

"And what if they know who I am? Who are they?"

"They play the same shit I do. The shooter."

"...And you know that for sure?"

"See the tall guy, bit of a beer gut? That's Wolf two, Morken. He's the owner of this place. Super friendly, knows everyone on the server, great guy. Which is fucking horrible because he'll recognize me too easily."

"Why is this a problem? I thought you were well regarded."

"W-Well I *uh* was, am, and still are. To a... an, excessive degree."

"Define excessive."

"W-When you *slapped my ass*..."

"Oh. *Ohhh*... I think I understand the problem now."

"Yeah."

"So what is so important that you need to liberate from this establishment?"

"See the cases in the back?"

"Affirmative."

"My... My character's uniform is a costume in the middle of it."

"I know it's been a few weeks but last I remember was a lot of generic military wear and backpacks."

"There was an event a while ago and the top ten players on the server by K D got a special set of gear d-designed after... *The r-*

resistance uniforms..."

"KD?"

"Kill to death ratio."

"Direct combat effectiveness measurement, I see. Gear from The War?"

"Yup. They got delivered three weeks ago."

"Am I to assume my dear that you were counted among this number of vaunted elite members?"

"I might have made... first place with over two-thousand to one... and got the only female set on the Asian server. Fiber enhanced senses might be a little overpowered... and cheating."

"You're the best?"

"Stat wise."

"Hmm. Keep up the good work."

"EH?"

"Did you think I was going to complain?"

"...Yeah?"

"You have entered regularly into a virtual arena of combat only to become the master of that domain as it should be *my dear*. I'm proud of you keeping your mind sharp.... Ryuko?"

Shoving her face down into her scarf she was trying very hard not to let a blush show on her cheeks.

"What exactly am I retrieving?"

"A-... A v-very light set of tactical belts that fit under a hooded cloak. These guys got their hands on the promotional items the developers had made to celebrate the last *anniversary of the end*. One set male, one female, and a couple odds and ends. They added my equipment details to it before putting it up for sale here in the store."

"Such as?"

"Arm patches, weapons, you know identifying *equipment*."

"But why is it so important to retrieve this suit of armor worn by thine digital visage?"

"They personalized it to be *mine*. After the whole... *You're voice is fucking hot! Oh she's Lez!* thing I'm very sure more than a few guys on the server would love nothing more than to buy that stuff a-and... w-well..."

"They would defile a physical representation of your equipment, if not one of yourself directly?"

"*It's a possibility*. Specially those on the other side who die... *a lot*."

"I see. And how much will it cost?"

"Oh you know... *couple hundred-thousand*. Balance is already on the corporate card."

"...You're joking. It's knock-off nudist equipment. How did you withdraw such an amount without me getting a notification?"

"You agreed to the terms of the *IOU*."

"*Anything, no questions*. I think I have a right to know when our accounts are getting drained by non-insignificant sums. At the very least to file an angry complaint with the bank for not sending that notification they were supposed to for such things."

"I never said it was *our* money."

"*Please don't tell me you robbed a bank*."

"Fuck no. It was a *uh*, generous donation by a *concerned citizen*."

"Someone I know?"

"Fairly acquainted. *Don't, worry about it*."

"...Very well. How do I proceed?"

"We poke around a bit, *try to slouch so you don't look like yourself*, then you'll go up to the other guy."

"The one with horribly colored streaks in his beard?"

"Yeah, he's not a real regular so he really won't care much beyond making the sale commission. Which will make him really antsy to get the sale done and over so you can't change your mind about wanting to buy it."

"Could I use that to get the price lowered?"

"*Don't worry about it*. we need to be in and out fast so we *don't* draw attention to ourselves. Anyway you'll point it out in the case, he'll tell you the price maybe bullshit about something to

make it seem more than it is, pay at the register, they will box it up for you, and then we leave."

"What do I do if they deviate?"

"Improvise, what else?"

"That's your specialty. I need order. Planning time."

"It's only a matter of *time* before one of the neckbeards get off their ass and travel into Aki to buy it themselves. I've already put it off for a bit tryin to figure how to actually do it. That problem has been more or less solved. I'll be able to hear everything going on when we separate behind the racks to the right, let's go."

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With the ding of a bell they entered the shop. Even with a number of other patrons browsing shelves stocked with everything from wires to vintage hardware the large guy behind the counter looked up from whatever he was organizing behind it to give them a hearty hello.

"Welcome, welcome to my store! Take a look around we'll still be open for plenty of time. If you need anything specific just let me know. If I don't have what you're looking for I probably know someone who does!"

The plan had lasted all of three seconds. Salvaging as much as she could Ryuko got Satsuki to wave hello and reassure the man they were just browsing for anything. Turning down the half dozen suggestions on what they looked like they would buy. Further directions whispered as they ducked deeper into the shelves.

"Fuck. *Uh...* I got it. Just head over to the displays."

"And then what? We will have to interact with the knowledgeable one. It's not like the target's some generic item either."

"I know..."

"And?"

"*I'm thinking!*"

The place itself was packed to the rafters but not very wide. Before they knew it they were face to face with glass doors that separated them from hundreds of tagged collectible items sporting price tags far above the rest of the store. Eyes immediately picking out the pair of outfits in it's center. Making lenses fall

down by shifting her ears to get a better look at them.

"Well, aren't they rather authentic."

They were highly modified nudist standard issue. Additions to the female uniform including some long boots sporting multiple pockets on the front and outside on each leg, finger-less shoulder-long gloves with similar pouches, and a small black bikini keeping the fake wearer modest. Slung over one shoulder was a modern rifle tipped with an orange barrel end, Head covered in tan hood. It was only upon further inspection that she spotted a cartoon depiction of a fluffy smiling fox embroidered onto patches. One on each arm in place of flags. Putting a hand under her chin she turned to find Ryuko blushing hard. Following her line of sight to finally spot a white tag stuck to a boot lace.

"So if I recall every organized unit corresponded to some animal. Correct?"

"Radio names y-yeah."

"What decided this?"

"Either t-the name of the unit founder, or job if they didn't have one."

"First place winner of the winter war memorial event. Fifth mechanized infantry division leader, Redfox... So that's your screen name? Fufu... Fufufufu~. Ahhh this is why you despise being called a cat! I am so sorry I got the wrong species."

"O-Oi keep it down!"

"Are you the trickster or... no thy divine dominion most definitely encompasses fertility and prosperity~."

"L-Later! W-We need to keep moving."

"Aye commander~. Orders?"

"You really gonna do this?"

"Ohhh it would be simply irresponsible of me not to~."

"G-Grab my a-ass."

"...Pardon?"

"R-Reach down and grab a h-handful. I'll... shove you in the arm. Roll with it. Look at me and plead for it. I'll say no and shake my head. *Insist*. Owner's gotta watch the register. He'll send the other guy to check on what's going on if there's a little disturbance."

"And you're sure?"

"No. But we got nothing else. *R-Ready when you are.*"

Without room for objection the act began. Her mind was screaming at her not to do such a thing, but the older more rational part had already convinced itself that following a plan meant selling it convincingly. She was supposed to be a perverted instigator? *So be it.* After snaking her right arm out of her coat's pocket she hit a snag though, Ryuko's skirt however short *did* have a two inch wide belt still. So she tried to improvise. Dipping backwards for just a second she got her hand past the bottom edge and went straight for the strip of material between parted legs. Firmly tugging it up and toward the back getting an audible "eep!" of surprise from the woman as her knees crashed together.

That and the shove she gave Satsuki got nearly half the store's attention. She had enough sense of self to keep her hair from burning to life right there and used both hands to flatten out her skirt. Trying very hard to ignore the tight material severally bunched up and almost *in* beneath. Giving a genuine look of *what the fuck eyebrows!?* that she took as her cue instead to just continue. Voice intoned just a bit lower than usual.

"Aww come on, it'll look great on you."

"Can I help you two?"

Satsuki spun around to find the owner behind her. Not the one they wanted. He wasn't smiling as much as before either. She was going to try and excuse them but took it as their opportunity. Holding up a finger to make him wait a second she looked back toward Ryuko.

"*Please?*"

Catching up she closed her eyes, turned half away, then nodded sheepishly at it. Lightly clapping her hands together Satsuki turned back to the man.

"We'd like the woman's costume in case... three?"

An arm was thrown around her shoulder dragging her away from the glass. Whispers directed at her.

"You know what it is?"

"I... don't play but I've watched plenty. Fox, right?"

"Best girl on the whole server I tell ya. Worked with her myself! Wish she played more and grabbed more territory for us though."

She's got some kind of relationship going on keeping her busy."

"You don't say."

"Yeah, we'll manage. Anyway enough babbling and onto the important thing I needed to ask, what's going on here?"

"Just some of our usual back and forth exacerbated by the prospects before us, nothing to worry about."

"Well... alright, wait. Did you actually convince her to put it on?"

"So it seems."

"Damn, so that's what that was about? You are one lucky son of a bitch."

"...*Mostly correct.* Work with me here before she changes her mind?"

"As fast as my arms can work so you can live the dream! You do know how much it is though right?"

"I've got a good card from work, don't worry."

"On it!"

Standing aside with the crowd they watched as both workers meticulously dismantled half of the specific display. One bringing out a metal footlocker emblazoned with the game's name to pack away the costume itself. The other clearing air-soft rifle, four pistols, and a real trench knife that had been sheathed around back which all went into a wood crate. In the middle of the small commotion Ryuko escaped into the outside air leaving her standing next to the front register waiting for everything to be rung up. This wait brought another hitch.

"Where did yer *uh* friend go?"

"Getting some fresh air. Bit *closer* than friends."

"Yeah it's kinda packed tonight. But that means more business!"

"Small successes build up."

"I hear ya. You know, you're both kinda familiar. Can't put my finger on it though."

"We get that."

"Yeah? Here we go blasted junk finally working, one whopping total of four-hundred-and-seventy-two-thousand even. I'm assuming you

got a card cause not gonna lie I kinda don't want to sit and count all that by hand."

"Where do I swipe?"

As directed she pulled out a black plastic card patterned like carbon-fiber imprinted with silver numbers and letters. Joint checking account under the corporation instead of either of their names. Unfortunately for her yet again it was unusual enough to draw his eye to her hands. And she filed an internal note to berate Houka for designing them as such.

"Excuse me, couldn't help but notice... you got a lucky guy? Nice ring."

"Noo... *More than friends.*"

"...Oh? *OH! Uh.* congratulations, last year?"

"Around. Thank you. She's a handful."

"You do you, that's what I always say. Welcome anytime, just need a signature on the screen in front of you and you're good to go for now."

And yet again she faced a problem. More internal agonizing. Large sum clearance. There was unfortunately only one thing she *could* do to keep the sale. She braced herself and signed. Three seconds later he pulled everything up on the register screen to verify it. While it was questionable if he was a fashion follower, his jaw dropped at the bottom few lines. Turning to face her.

"K-... *Kir...* Y-You're..."

While not an issue at the regular little shops around where they lived, and those renting from their buildings, she was forced to get used to this by now. Putting experience to work in escaping as fast as possible before he could make a scene and trap her in the center of attention.

"Yes in the flesh, this is not a fraudulent transaction, if you call the bank even by tomorrow morning they will happily certify the transaction as legitimate, please don't yell."

"...T-Then she was. Y-Your wife's..."

He was losing it. She needed something. So she went for whatever might work, and hoped it wouldn't backfire. Putting her elbows on the counter she leaned forward on it to look down her nose at the man sitting in his chair behind the register slightly below.

"It's Morken right? Listen, I just want to go home with my packages. That is my current objective. I've heard you understand

how important it can be to complete such a thing in a timely fashion."

"You... You... *know me?*"

"I wouldn't claim to know anything about you at all as a stranger, but what which I have heard is the quality of your character, *which I've heard* is fairly good. I simply ask that we finish up here so I can take *my purchase and my Fox home*. If you can keep a level head and the details of our patronage close to the vest I would be *thrilled*. Maybe we would decide to come back when there is more time. I'm sure that you understand that we are rather busy people and value what discretion can be afforded to our personal lives like everyone else."

She could see the thought process play out from her quiet hints. The fervent excitement in his eyes after figuring who her wife was amusingly beating out what he looked like after figuring out who she was. Rapidly typing away on the little keyboard in front of him she rose an eyebrow when a twenty percent off coupon was applied to her purchase before being finalized.

"No problems uh L-Lady Kiryuin. If anyone deserves to have the uniform, it's the woman who it's made after. You're both w-welcome anytime like I said. And *uh* maybe even when we're closed if there's something you want. The number out front and on the website is my business cell. Anytime, seriously. I, and a lot of the other guys, owe her a lot. *Um w-when the Fox howls, wolf brings the teeth!*. S-She'll know w-what that *uh* yeah... *please tell her I said hi!*"

Thanking the man she picked up both large boxes by carrying handles and met Ryuko outside, handing the metal one over to carry as they headed for central. Infinitely thankful that this was over.

"Now was that so hard?"

"Y-Yes..."

"*Mmm*. Mine services have been rendered satisfactorily? Also Morken says hi."

"Y-You deviated. Wait, what?"

"I told you I do better with a solid plan. Hit several snags trying to pay. The amount was large enough I needed to sign for it and I'm not committing fraud. One thing led to another trying to get him to stay quiet, and now I think if you wished to shop there regularly you could do so with the comfort that he was able to keep his mouth shut. Time will tell. Any other problems?"

"Oh great. That's just what I needed..."

"You said he was a good person. We'll see how much of one. Anything else?"

"You gave m-me a fucking wicked wedgie and it's rubbing with e-every step."

"If I recall your wearing something with side ties?"

"Y-Yeah, why?"

"Keep a steady pace."

In among foot traffic yet again she moved closer while street lamps came alive from above. Passing the rope handle to her left she freed her right hand to quickly shot down to reach up into the front of Ryuko's skirt. In one smooth motion yanking the end of the first knot popping it open, coming back to her left to pop that knot as well, and finally in the middle of Ryuko's surprise pulling the item in it's entirety off her. Balled panties in hand she found Ryuko's free left and grasped it tightly to conceal fabric in the evening darkness. Blushing owner making no attempt to use her anatomy to reclaim and replace them.

"There, I have fixed my mistake... Bit windy tonight though isn't it dear? Rain might be coming back, damp conditions were in the forecast after-all."

She smiled at the overflowing warmth shooting into her arm while the steady sound of excited heels clicked all the way back to the garage.

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Finally at home Satsuki sought out her soft source of warmth and comfort to curl up against while reading in the hour before they should get to bed. From room to room she couldn't find any sign of the woman. Almost as an afterthought she went into Ryuko's closet, where low and behold she was sitting on the floor near the back staring at the two new boxes in front of her. Noticing the presence she answered a questioning hum.

"Sup?"

"I was hoping you were sitting somewhere so that I might employ you as a backrest or pillow per the usual. It seems you have other plans for the night."

"Oh, no, I just..."

"You're not going to put it on?"

"Uhh."

"After all the trouble of acquiring it and the work someone had to do to put those cute little details on it I feel it deserves a chance by the resident *costume master*. Besides I informed the man that you would wear it, and I am not a liar."

"But it's just glorified nudist crap."

"Which is technically your organization, of which you are oddly enough the only one of us who has not actually worn it's equipment. You're also coincidentally the one person I know who's a *pure-exhibitionist*."

She frowned when the shoulders in front of her slumped a little in silence. Sighing she went back into the room to put her book down on a dresser. Going back in she knelt down to hug her from behind. Putting chin on her shoulder to look at what she was studying intently.

"Is it logistically preferable? *Good heavens no*. Do I care? Not in the slightest."

She smiled at an eye that turned to look at her. Faint blush forming.

"If I disapproved I wouldn't be *aiding* you in such endeavors now would I? As the nice gentleman told me, *you do you~*. Just so long as you don't start flashing privates to the public."

"...Ya really wanna see it?"

"I have a distinct feeling that it's going to be one of those outfits you both refuse to put on once, then refuse to take off after realizing you actually like it thus end up adding it to your ever growing collection of home lounge wear. And... M-Maybe another request along with it."

"Give me a few minutes. Belts might need to be let out some to fit. What else?"

When she heard stutters of words not quite formed Ryuko turned fully with some curiosity to face Satsuki deeply blushing herself.

"Eh?"

"How... good, are you at... forming those fiber... *limbs*? Extensions."

"If I follow an actual nerve bundle it fucks with my brain less. Why?"

"C-Could... could you... maybe... *Form them elsewhere?* Than your usual spots near four major joints."

"Anywhere on my skin, just a matter of figuring out the *controls... Why?*"

"I... I just thought with the *revelation* on the nature of your *perceived presence...* Could you form a... *tail?*"

Now Ryuko was also blushing. Staring hard at her like she was going insane. But she wasn't done.

"A-And the..."

Releasing her shoulders she reached up to use her hands to motion out a pair of ears on top of her head. Leaving the one usually pushing the limits of her body lost and confused to find herself on the other end of the usual ensuing conversations about those limits.

"*Please? For me?*"

"...Fucking, *Why?*"

"W-Well I looked at those little pictures, a-and I know you, and... and I thought... *I-It would be adorable...* With your hair and how it fluffs... *Please, please, please Imouto!* I will do anything, you talked about another car the other day?"

"I mentioned there was plenty of room for two more if you wanted one yerself--"

"One whatever you want. Any make and model. I will *find* room in the budget!"

"...A project car?"

"Done!"

"That's not how project cars work--"

"I don't care you can have it just-... Please try. You form and reform them effortlessly, just changing the shape of your threads doesn't burn significant power if any."

"Uh... That's like giving me a blank check Nee-san. Over years."

"I know and that part does frighten my sensibilities a little, but this is something *I n-need to see with my own eyes.*"

"I-... Fucking... *You know what. fuck it, fine? I'll, see what I can do.*"

She could have sworn she heard Satsuki squeak a little while grinning at her. Ignoring her as she lightly bounced in place she turned back around to start unpacking the boxes, undressing, and figuring out how one sprouts ears on top of their head. Anxious individual behind her wringing her hands already in anticipation.

"Anything I can I help with?"

"Just find somewhere safe to keep the cheap Ka-bar."

"I can do that!"

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"Well?"

"*Fiber... I feel stupid.*"

"We wore them into combat, and you equipped your character in it *my little fox~.*"

Finally turning the corner she walked into their private living room. Tan cloak's profile only broken by a pair of black boots, the barrel of a fake gun, and a pair of bumps pushing up from the top of her hood. Eliciting both excitement and a small pout from a face perched just over the back of a couch

"My dear *that* is cheating."

"I-It's, *it's weird okay?*"

"We all had belts *without* bikinis. You choose my underwear every day. And we've personally had marathon sex regularly for several months now you *beast~*. We are quite acquainted with each others wonderful skin. Now am I to take the pair of lumps in thy hood to mean the experiment was a success? Or is this some cruel prank?"

"Yes. No, I mean... I-It's still kinda... *you know...*"

"Do you require *encouragement?*"

"What kinda encouragement?"

The head ducked back down behind the dark leather furniture. What popped back up was several towels thrown over the back and a thong

fired like a rubber band at her to land on her gun. Coming back up the smiling face was supported by a bare arm. The other swinging her bra around by a finger before getting thrown back over her shoulder. Item landing on a guitar still within a specific open case sitting on the coffee table.

"Oh woe is me, I seem to have misplaced all mine garb. It would be a tragedy if I were to fall prey to the chill of the early spring night yes? Please oh goddess of thread and wine, give thy disciple the gift of warmth to survive this hardship. I would be ever so *grateful~*."

"W-Whatever happened to nothing on the couch?"

"I have prepared thusly in advance."

Ryuko sighed but crossed into the room properly. Tossing the gun to land safely on a far seat before jumping up in the air over the back of the couch. Her cape fluttering behind her showing a shock of red before she landed next to Satsuki. Still covered in a tan tent she pulled together from inside. Nude individual to her left immediately moving to embrace her. Hands and eyes roaming her and pulling at the material until she finally relented and allowed Satsuki to pull the whole thing off of her. Mouth falling agape and eyes tearing up at the blushing face. And the pair of red triangular additions poking out of her more usual released black and red hair. Then outright biting her knuckle to suppress a squeal after properly spotting the matching red tail swishing around the opposite side from her. Trail of fuzz coming out of a spot just below a belt and above the bikini bottom. Her tailbone.

"KYUU~! I-It would seem they fit you. Those are still cute depictions and *o-oh gods above you did it~!*"

"S-Squad symbols are made in a drawing pad thing. Made it myself... The *uh*, I didn't know how big to make the *uh*... Poofy shit."

"I would happily pin one such depiction to the strap of my bag if it were available. I'm sorry but later. For now I must *insist* that you bring that over here before I jump you."

She chuckled and concentrated. Memorizing the increasingly more fluid motions of the replicated-by-fiber-member as long as her leg, and covered in long fiber *hair* that went out as wide as her head, brushed past the towels and into Satsuki's lap. Smiling when the older woman started hugging it and brushing it all over every square inch of herself uncontrollably. Stopping with it wrapped around her neck as she put her head down on Ryuko's lap. Comfortably wriggling with delight.

"C-Can't let you keep that eyebrows, kinda *attached*."

"Don't need to. I already have the rest of you to myself my lovely, lovely, lovely, adorable *Kitsune*~."

She frowned and reached out with little cries like a child when Ryuko pulled it off and away from her. Swirling it back and forth above her just out of reach. Unsatisfied at being denied her fuzzy plaything she sprung up to grab Ryuko's chest harness. Throwing them both sideways onto the couch in one motion. Now side by side she forcefully shoved her into the cushions and crawled up alongside to get a look at the top of her head. Fingers immediately going to explore the pair of soft offshoots that shot straight up. Gently picking through hair to find they were very much real, and fully formed. Lightly blowing into them making them twitch and flatten down to the side. Getting her arms around Ryuko's glowing head she hugged her, pushing her face into the softness between the pair of ears as they made little movements.

"Oh Imouto *thank you!* You wonderfully adorable woman! I could just eat you right now... Ryuko?"

Noticing the lack of movement she turned her head to see the tail stuck straight up, looking down to realize she had properly buried a face into her chest again.

"Ah."

Getting a hold of herself finally she shifted back down to lay staring at the dazed face slowly coming back to coherence. Half closing an eye when she moved an arm up to scratch behind an ear with a chuckle. Tail swooping around to rest along her back.

"*Mmm*~."

"W-Where the f-fuck did this come from?"

"Does it really matter? I saw that picture and it had to happen. Have I... overstepped my bounds? Are you okay?"

"I'm fine. But I'm not putting on a leash or some shit if this is *your* i-idea of a f-fetish..."

"I would never. Thou are a wild animal that willingly chose to domesticate thyself to stay with me. I might ask you to... sleep like this... *from now on*... and maybe... *more often than that*...though. *Please?*"

"Nee-san I can't exactly put on pants right now."

"You live in short skirts. Oftentimes forgoing everything but undergarments all together. Some of those even have holes in the back already that it can fit through I'd imagine."

She looked at her non-believing, but sighed again.

"If you tell anyone--"

"My lips are *sealed*."

"I'll... *Think about it*. It's not... *not... L-Lower and a little to the left...*"

Moving her hand slightly she readjusted where she was lightly scratching scalp to now include the rear base of an ear. Eyes in front of her both closing and flickering along with her nose occasionally flaring.

"Sometimes... m-maybe. *F-Fucking hell why is t-this...ss... mmmmm... mmm...*"

Smiling Satsuki didn't mind the change of plans. Softly humming she kept rubbing around until Ryuko's little noises stopped. She fell asleep. Getting up off the couch as lightly as she could she gently gathered up the sleeping form and carried her off to bed.

It had been an eventful day for her after all. She deserved the rest.

And it gave Satsuki the opportunity to get into her night clothes before laying in bed. Falling asleep herself with her face buried in the back of wonderfully soft hair, arms crossed under Ryuko's breasts. New limb protectively wrapping her waist subconsciously in retaliation.

She may have forgotten to remind Ryuko to put the ears away before work the following morning.

Chapter End Notes

Kept 8 as is. I hope this time I got it right, and by extension Nonon got it right.

It's been a challenge. It is not easy to proofread 42 pages of 10pt font so I'm really trying to not leave any mistakes, but please forgive me if some escape notice.

Also feel I need to justify the ending. Which may or may not leave the reader with a lot of *what the fuck?*

No I am not making Satsuki a furry don't panic. Unless your into that. Then I might disappoint. So maybe panic. Or not. There was an opportunity for a proper *Nee-san*

internal-meltdown-ovary-overload, so I took it. Will the fox ears come back? I honestly have no clue.

And let's be real, if there was ever a story with these two that was gonna get just a little weird *this would be the one*.

As always, thank you for reading.

Into 10 and beyond I go.

Heavy drive

Chapter Summary

“Hello?”

“Hey Toad, time to blow that scene. Gonna need you down here.”

“Jakuzure. Explain?”

“We're getting everybody and the stuff together to make some noise, *ya dig?*”

“Do you not have an orchestra for that? Regretfully I can't play any instruments besides the triangle. If that is something you need me to do I can see if it fits in the schedule-”

“Just get your butt to central before Satsuki decides to start allowing *collateral damage* again.”

“Something happened?”

“*Ooooh boy has it. Pack heavy, we're shipping for Osaka next. Business trip.*”

“I see. I SHALL BE THERE! THE IMPENETRABLE SHIELD WILL NEVER FAIL TO HEED THE CALL OF ACTION-”

“*Stop shouting before I go deaf you neanderthal!*”

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

As the weather warmed around them the final week of April gave way to May, bringing with it a complicated thing to figure out. Previously the both of them had completely ignored birthdays. It had been an unspoken mutual agreement based on the various *negative events* that became associated with them in their lives. One spending the last occasion sitting on a couch before a fireplace to sort out her thoughts with one of the few bottles of fuel grade spirits kept around in hand, never opened. The other throwing energy into any productive enterprise needed at the time, to escape her own thoughts on old *gifts of pain* meant to remind her that she was only alive every year for a long time because of *mother's gracious will*.

But after getting pestered by their various friends through the new-year celebrations and both wishing to move on while reclaiming

bits of themselves they eventually agreed to try something together. Do *something* like a normal couple would for once.

This did put some unfair pressure on Ryuko though. She had to figure something out first.

It didn't help that over the weeks and weeks since December the small number of ideas she could come up with were all politely declined for various reasons, she had no idea what you get the person that already owns everything they want aside from an infinite supply of specific books she would only ever chose herself, and Nee-san was otherwise unwilling to host a traditional celebration Ryuko had known long ago given their not so traditional arrangement. With days to go she rolled up her sleeves and started working on the only idea that came to mind. Setting aside the number of items she was supposed to actually be working on she poured it instead into this personal project. Starting to hum while joining thread directly to thread from scratch in frustratingly complicated ways even she thought *experimental*.

Having a nervous procurement specialist's number turned out to be kinda handy in getting the mountain of materials at least.

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The one thing Satsuki had agreed to by the eventual date was to relent and take the day off. The first time she had ever willingly left the day with nothing on her schedule. Nothing she could occupy herself with other than those few things lurking in her briefcase which would only make her blood rise to a light simmer if engaged. She trusted her other half to know what she was doing. Trusted that Imouto would come through with whatever it was that her mind was assembling.

Waking up that morning alone in bed was not much of a good start. Ache of loneliness dispersing though when she found a red glowing string neatly tied around her left wrist. Thin thing pulsing with an odd mix of sensations foreign to even her. Ones not yet cataloged within the rapidly growing internal compendium of feelings comprising what she understood to be Ryuko's second native language, *Life fiber*.

Sitting up she slid over to the side of the bed the line ran off of and found a pair of slippers waiting for her. Interest growing she forewent changing and stepped into the pair of green house shoes many shades more vibrant than her current slip. Only stopping to straighten herself out in the bathroom before walking out into the hall to follow a red road laid out before her. Gathering the string as she went.

The next stop wasn't far, just a door down to Ryuko's space.

Noting the string doubled back out she passed inside to follow this adventure properly. Carefully stepping through the room full of work she only looked up when the path arced up. Surprised at what was before her. Close to the window on a form sat a set of dark blue lingerie shining with light cast from hundreds if not thousands of pearls. From sea-shell pattern cups, to small blue-lace-seaweed frill, to a pair of stockings that upon close inspection she figured out were mirror image *insanely* detailed vertical dioramas of undersea life starting at *solid sand* toe boxes and ending with a lighter colored *sea-foam* band. Pattern continuing through clouds up the arms. Every detailed line from top to bottom filled with strung pearls embedded into the material itself. Sizes varying from grains of rice on limbs for many creature's eyes to a necklace sitting on the neck which built up to a large one-inch diameter *Faberge egg style pearl* that upon close inspection held a tiny seagull lit up by blue tinted light passing through glass inserts filling in every egg-shaped space carved from the pearl's surface.

It was gorgeous to the point she seriously feared she would ruin it by trying to touch it. But the red line passed around an anchor shaped garter clip. Little blue gift bow stuck on the shoulder of the wire structure facsimile of her own torso. So she undid fiber knot, placed the growing ball of *Ryuko* onto the bed, and very carefully changed.

Stepping back into her slippers to protect the items on her feet from the floor she took the ball of red yarn back into her now blue palms, arms littered with birds and clouds ringed in more small pearls, but bare fingers still continued to receive the odd signals while moving though the room again. Stopping briefly before a mirror that had another pair of slippers in another matching shade of color. Switching into them she studied her full body reflection. Turning to watch the shine of what from a distance would look like a starry night sky. Lightly smirking after realizing that she was in fact wearing the first push-up *Ryuko* had provided her. Further amplified by the *shell ridges* lined with more pearls in front.

Continuing on her path gathering string she went back out into the hall and toward the stairs. Taking turn after turn through the house she was starting to sense a theme. On a table was a small handbag patterned with a very familiar skull logo over matching crossed bones to form a *jolly roger* in pearls, reaching the library to find a pair of tiny glass bottle earrings by a single blue rose that matched the necklace's colors to put in, to a pair of dark navy shoes with vibrant blue bottoms and dark-stained wooden heels. Electing to just carry those for now she finally started hearing and smelling some interesting things while approaching the kitchen. Leaning just inside the door frame and putting a hand holding shoes on her hip to study the scene inside. Specifically the woman facing away from her.

Standing before the cook-top burners and working a pair of pans the extremely expressive ears left on top of her head from last night were about as flat as they could get in concentration. Matching lower extension slowly swishing from side to side bent up out the bottom of a red pleated miniskirt while she jerked both pans in her grasp up. Sending sizzling brown colored disks up into the air before catching both in their respective metal dishes. Releasing handles Ryuko raised her left hand to shoot out a vine far down the counter to her left to seize a mug. Bringing the steaming thing back to her grasp and mouth while she almost danced through different stations. Mixing small bowls and chopping up small items she dumped into the pans her ears happily twitching after returning to an upright position. Her voice starting up again in the warm air.

"She can kill with a smile, she can wound with her eyes... She can ruin your faith with her causal lies, and she only reveals what she wants you to see... She hides like a child but she's always, a woman, to meee~...."

She can lead you to love, she can take you or leave you... She can ask for the truth but she'll never believe ya... and she'll take what you give her as long as it's free... Yeah she steals like a thief but she's always, a woman, to meee~...

Ohhh, she takes care of her seeelf.... she can wait if she wants, she's ahead of her time... Ohh~, and she never gives out, and she never gives in... she just changes her mind...

She was bouncing on the balls of her feet in a little dance only she would know the steps to in that instant before forgetting the next. Finishing her various tasks with what Satsuki would only describe as the unearthly lightness of an angel. Kitchen windows pouring light over the woman bringing out the sparkle of fibers in her hair. The kitchen itself was generally warm from it's position and appliances, but in those odd mornings Ryuko dug deep into that stubborn self-sufficiency of an alley cat to use the space it filled with a blanketing warmth of life far from anything Satsuki had known.

And she'll promise you more than the garden of Eden, and she'll carelessly cut you an laugh while yer bleedin... But she'll bring out the best and the worst you can be, blame it all on yourself because she's always a woman to meee~..."

Ohhhhh, she takes care of her self. She can wait if she wants, she's ahead of her time... Ohhhh~, and she never gives out. And she never gives in... she just changes her mind...

She is frequently candid and suddenly cruel, she can do as she pleases she's nobodies fool... and she can't be convicted she's

earned her degree.... and the most she will do is throw shadows at you but she's always a woman to me~.... Mmmm hmm mm hm mmmm.... Mmmmm hmm mm Mmm hmm mm Mmmmm mmmm Mmm hmm mm Mmmmm mmmm..."

Watching the movements of a form that was unburdened from worry, war, or pain. Every flick of a wrist and every shift of her waist just another step through a graceful set of precisely calculated motions far from her usual manner of collapsing into furniture, just getting things done mechanically.

It was a beautiful appearance that she usually only otherwise got to see in motion when driven half delirious from the overpowering flood of pleasure one gets from being brought to climax while also being fed the output of another soul's nerves at the same time. Placing items in her grasp on a clear bit of counter space she took the ball of red and kissed it. Finally catching the chef's complete attention she lightly clapped, then covered her mouth with the back of a hand to stop a laugh about as politely as she could manage when tail stopped moving and shot up at attention flipping up red pleats in the process.

Half turning to give Satsuki a good morning Ryuko stopped as soon as eyes crossed over her, mouth hanging open despite knowing what she was going to look like. Turning back around to face the burners quickly. Words sputtered a little while she fought the skirt being pulled up by the subconsciously driven happy wag behind her.

"M-Mornin Sats t-take a seat. Gimme another minute."

Walking onto the tile flooring she turned slightly left to get into a chair in the breakfast nook. Table already half populated with various containers and small fruit bowls. Answering after settling in with a napkin over her lap and giving the ball of string still in her grasp a little appreciative rub before letting it retract back to Ryuko's thigh.

"And what an interesting morning it's been. Did you *make* all of this as I figure you might say *pirate booty*~?"

"E-Everything but the plant, earrings, and materials themselves. I can't sew sapphire together. *Not easily at least...* The nerds mentioned I should be able to crush pencils or some crap into diamond but I haven't tried that. Not yet anyway."

"This isn't glass?"

"Hell no, that would scratch up like a bitch in no time. Just cause it *looks* fragile as hell doesn't mean it gets a free pass from durability requirements."

"I've noticed the small stones all over embedded into the

material. Rather comfortable on the skin actually... How did these get there?"

"By making the material and stringing them in as I went.

"You wove these?"

"It's not exactly anything remotely easy or really worth doing for usual stuff cause ya tear yer fuckin hair out when one thread lines up wrong yeah, but when you need a one off material pattern there's kinda no point getting it made somewhere else."

"...Fiber weaving?"

"Aye."

With another sound of metal on metal both pans were jerked up again off the burners. Steaming projectiles now launched to land perfectly on a plate to her right now four disks tall, sitting next to one stacked up to ten. Turning fire off she sent a number of lines out from exposed shoulders to grab various things including a tea set while she brought the plates to the table by hand. Putting the small stack in front of Satsuki she used her still flying helpers to assemble the spread while staring at her fuzzy complication. Deciding the easiest thing to do was swing it around a side across the front of her lap so she could take the wooden seat opposite.

"Dig in Brows!"

"Pancakes of various kinds?"

"Chocolate chocolate-chip, chocolate with chocolate-marshmallow-chunks, chocolate an blueberries, and last one is plain with banana. Boiled up some fresh strawberry syrup if you want to top it with something hot."

"First you put me in some of the fanciest trappings you've ever produced and then you put enough unhealthy food in front of me to ensure I won't fit in them anymore. This is contradictory my dear."

"There's fruit here!"

"Among a hypnotizing mountain of aromatically pleasing empty sugar and calories."

"...You'll need the energy."

The second she finally picked up a fork and sought out a cup of tea she found one already poured for her. Person responsible for everything meticulously inhaling her food with the aid of speedy silverware.

"For?"

"To-ray."

"Table manners Imouto~."

Ears flattened at the little admonishment, bringing a forced half-frown from across that quickly dissolved into a smile. Properly swallowing Ryuko set down utensils to pop a button on her sleeveless blouse. Reaching down her collar she pulled out a white envelope and held it out for curious hands to take.

"Today. I think I f-finally figured something out you won't turn down because you've sorta been buggin me about it for a while."

Quirking an eyebrow up she opened it to find a number of paper slips which confused her, pulling out the handful of items to study them she started reading words printed all over them. And covered her mouth again with wide eyes. They were tickets to various plays and shows running from eight in the morning to seven at night. And last but not least a pair of passes to a modern-art museum exhibition event around nine she had been passively looking into with a wild notion of convincing Ryuko to go. She had figured it would have been impossible to drag her anywhere near there without fighting a veritable world war three though.

Looking up speechless in surprise she saw a smiling face, but eyes ringed with worry and doubt.

"Y-Yer sometimes on about *culture* and junk... S-So I got my hands on some *uh* stuff, and It's n-not like I can g-go *alone*... It's all in town, we don't need to travel or fly nowhere, and all we gotta do is show up to *enjoy*. H-How bout it?"

Staring back down at them she finally uncovered her mouth and leafed through them.

"Small theaters coming back to life after the end finally putting on shows... You need to acquire these months in advance to get seats. To have so many that fit together on the same day is..."

Getting up she moved around to hop into Ryuko's lap. Sitting on her thighs while kissing the top of her head, appreciative little rubs given between her ears.

"Yes I will go with you! This is a wonderful idea, thank you!"

"N-Nee-sssan..."

Looking down Ryuko was smiling, but almost crying. Voice coming through grit teeth

"Is something wrong?"

"Y-Your s-s-sitting on my..."

"...Oh!"

Shifting backward she positioned so the red bunch of fuzz's thin core could pop up between her thighs comfortably. Throwing her arms around it to hug it into her chest. Face buried into softness while a hand gently pressed against her lower back so she wouldn't fall off.

"Sorry... It might take a little to get used to this being around. Thank you for not just giving up on it's existence."

"You go fucking nuts over it, it's kinda a special day... and ya did pay for it so..."

Releasing the fuzz she was getting worried. She might have been a little rash in promising her anything to make them exist.

"Exactly how much am I paying for these?"

"Welll..."

Reaching into her chest again she pulled out a brochure. Handing it over Satsuki's inner fears were being realized. Fingering the bright yellow square image with a black prancing horse in the center on it's cover.

"So they do this thing where they need to *invite* you to buy shit. Those are all super exclusive hand built shit. In order to get them otherwise someone needs to sell their car after getting it and getting blacklisted by the company. So prices go like triple for some secondhand."

"I-Italian..."

"They specialize in red~."

"...R-Ryuko this is..."

She couldn't even open the thing before it was plucked from her grasp, unceremoniously balled up, and tossed into the garbage near the other end of the room. Smirk meeting deeply confused frown.

"*Is not it.* I ain't driving shit made by some elitist bastards that ask for your name before asking what you're looking for."

"...Excuse me but what?"

"I was thinkin bout it, some crazy *why not* kinda thing, so Pinky gave them a call during their operating hours for me. They fucking

hung up when she told them she was working on behalf of a *Kiryuin*. Few minutes later *they* called her back and some different guy apologized like crazy. Got them to back off so our side could *think about it.*"

"And you're done thinking?"

"Not entirely, but fuck I don't think anything from them is coming here anytime soon."

"Then what *did* you go after?"

"Besides give you a heart attack~?"

"*Besides that* yes."

"Something a lot older and a butt-ton classier. It's making the circuit to Rinne for work before getting trucked down here, needs things done I can't do with wrenches. Don't worry about it, focus on today. Finish eating. We do have thirty minutes for lunch but the next nicely sized meal is gonna be dinner somewhere after the last show and before that art thing that will be *who-knows-how-fucking-long.*"

"Alright... But please tell me I can wear clothes over this. It's magnificent, but it's still just an under layer."

"I-If there was ever anyone who could get away without..."

"I will concede that I am in a pretty good shape *and wearing something I would strongly suggest to be on display instead of given to me to languish in a drawer more often than not*, but my service with *nudist beach* was temporary and now over. I would never wish to steal thy thunder my overly seductive sister~."

"I g-got that one blue gown from Iori yesterday, it'll match up."

"Ooo~. Does that mean you will be taking it's inspired opposite twin out of storage for once?"

"...I-If ya want?"

"*Mmm~*. If that's the case then I know just the place we can go for our nighttime feasting."

"Sound's like were gonna need car service."

"Unless you would trust the valet with thine chariot for once, yes."

"...I'll call for a ride."

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Back home for a short bit after dinner Satsuki and her other half were preparing for the last of the day's outings. Her very *annoyed* other half that was currently grumbling to herself, but still getting dressed without real complaint like she promised. Swapping out of one particularly eye catching red and gold gown and into something that looked like she was *not* on an *exhibition* herself for once.

"*Stupid fancy napkin. Stupid pants. Stupid, stupid, stupid...*"

"Imouto I don't know what you are possibly so upset about. The shows were wonderful and you still look positively *divine*."

In an attempt to sooth the raging seamstress Satsuki stepped over from her dresser to gently tug on midnight black material. An effort to help straighten Ryuko's appearance out. Stopping for a bit to rub shoulders underneath flawlessly fitted jacket.

"*Thou art tense my dear. Wouldst thou be paradoxically nervous about appearing in the public eye while properly covered from head to heel?*"

"Suits are fuckin boring when you have to stick to *proper form*. If you wanted to make me stare at *overpriced finger paintings* did you have to be interested in the *one fuckin place* that currently bans skirts?"

"*I still wish to know just how you figured that out, but I digress...* They are publicly recognized works of art made by publicly recognized artists. I was intrigued after hearing descriptions of an installation that surrounds the viewer with mirrors to create an infinite line of existence around them. Some liken it to peering through the universe itself."

"Made by a true visionary in the art of *creep shots* if the pamphlet pictures were accurate."

Shoulders sagging Satsuki sighed while turning Ryuko away from their own mirror to personally inspect her latest, *and possibly most dignified*, work of art. Forced to wear formal, *and pants*, to attend the exhibit she had decided to finally make a suit for herself for the occasion instead of borrowing something. Though she still managed to include her usual accouterments under her *accoutrement*. Starting at the floor black stocking clad toes peaked out from under straight slacks that matched the color of her jacket, upper article itself still made to accentuate her

figure by buttoning tightly under her chest and flaring the bottom lower than normal out around her thighs. Red pressed shirt open at the collar down to give a peak at the beginnings of her breasts. Matching red accents ranging from inch-wide glass button cuff-links that had started life as regular earrings gifted to her by a well meaning Mako for Christmas, triangular pocket square, ever present pair of scissors wedged a little down her cleavage, and *surprisingly* a re-application of lipstick that matched the bright tone of her highlights. Nee-san had helped her apply it initially before they left in the morning and it had truthfully taken Ryuko multiple attempts to re-apply correctly herself before she dragged her feet into the master bedroom in a respectfully silent huff.

Smoothing out lapels, ensuring the heroic buttons responsible for her modesty were secure, and picking the faintest bits of lint off Satsuki responded in a tired tone. "You head the most artistically liberal department of our company, including the overseeing of a great deal of traditional sketch work. *Which I've been told also includes your own scribbling away in your secretive little red book that you never let anyone see.* Could you not hold the other visual arts in at least a *modicum* of respect?"

"the only true art I respect no matter what is *m-making-you-cum*. Everything else comes in varyin degrees of great to *never-should-see-the-light-of-day*."

"Veritable master of coaxing love from my loins through touch and song or not, please do not resort to being rude nor crude when we are there. Now should I take thy careful re-application of facial adornment to mean you are actually taking this outing seriously?"

"You s-seemed to like it. I just thought... *n-nevermind. Later.*"

"That I do to be honest, it makes you look more dignified. Like the fire in your hair is a masterful work of design not rebellion... *Or past abuse beyond human comprehension...* What machinations art thou already setting in motion for further this night, *hmm~?*"

Attempts to pick an answer out of Ryuko were met with deflections, gears refusing to meet her eyes full well knowing what passed for her soul was an open book to *she that was quickly mastering the art of reading it*. Instead fixating *safely* on the space in which both their torso's pressed together comfortably. However, the ever *delightful* swell within her shirt seemed to have shrunk inwards since this morning. And hands shoved into jacket pockets were running along her waist.

With another hum Satsuki pulled Ryuko's face up to rest their foreheads together. Questioning eyes finally locking with her own as hands deftly undid the black metal buckle on her belt. Access otherwise unobstructed she sunk a hand down the front of

her pants to get a feel for what lay beneath. Expecting nothing but flesh she raised an eyebrow as fingers glided past thin garter belt holding her leg-wear up to run down a *cotton* front triangle. Flush and heat rising in intensity from across as she felt the material on the gusset even further down. Not stopping the light movements fingers were making along middle indent as they spoke.

"*Imouto~?*"

"*H-Hmm?*"

"I'm pretty sure you're starting to move into almost pure silk everyday. Now the small dry-cleaning setup you put in the basement is fine and all, but that just *begs* the question where didst thou taketh these from?"

"*Uh t-they're not mine... W-Well technically my name is on them but- not per say.*"

"I have said before *what's mine is yours*, and you are free to partake of my wardrobe *including those specific items already in use on occasion* and to just return them after *whatever you choose to do with them at the time exactly* to the hamper. However, after pilfering mine pantaloons were you perchance planing on privately parading with them out into the public tonight?"

"*And bra.*"

"*Ahh but of course my dear.* That much should be obvious. It's a crime of the highest order to separate *designated-drawer-mates* like a cruel barbarian in thy realm. This does raise a minor question though, now that I think about it what are your sizes anyway? Surely what you normally wear has official equivalents even if you never add such unneeded labels to our personal items."

"*T-Trade secret.* I can make it work for a few hours without a problem."

Separating to glance downward at the mounds pushing against her own Satsuki noted the abyss beneath buttons of red shirt. Locking eyes again she used her free hand to pinch another two open with a smile. Patterned skin tone material straining valiantly against it's slightly overflowing contents now visible from directly above.

"*Trade secret? Of all things to-...* Is the fabric I'm fingering clean?"

"*F-For now... won't b-be for long if you keep doing that.*"

"So if I'm understanding this right, on top of the bottom you were going to put up with being *stuffed* into my humble support straps specifically to *spice up an evening with Nee-san* and her *stuff*y

interests~?"

"M-Maybe. *Maybe more than that...*"

"You are already forced to hide your beautiful hair most days, and take such pride in *thy assets*. You shouldn't punish them."

"We still have time, I can go chang--"

With her right *occupied* her left was brought up to sink a finger down into Ryuko's cleavage to hook the front of her bra. Using it as a lead to turn Ryuko back towards the mirror while lips locked together. Before the intent of her move could be deciphered she pulled back, mouth now coated in a layer of red *as planned*. Maintaining eye contact she knelt down onto the bedroom floor to tug black slacks slightly down. Noting that the *borrowed minimalist bottom* sitting over black garters was indeed a matching shade of nude to item up above.

A perfect canvas.

Tilting head down a bit she pressed another kiss, carefully, over specific sensitive spot. Once again pulling back she ensured red kiss was perfectly painted on it's destination.

Shifting over sideways momentarily to ensure Ryuko saw the mark through reflective surface, she got back up to her feet and returned *The Missus's* pants to their former presentable state. Walking back over to her dresser to wipe away the remnant of glossy crimson on her lips with a tissue and continue preparing her own slate-gray three-piece ensemble as if nothing had happened.

Ryuko decided against re-buttoning her shirt, Nee-san was scary perceptive and she would need the ventilation at this rate. Her few unscrambled thoughts reflecting that more capable fiber heat-exhaust was starting to sound like a really good idea to explore later.

"*There*, now you have your own little painting to enjoy if nothing else catches your eye."

"...D-Do y-you have *any* idea how much of a mess t-these are gonna be in a couple hours?"

"As the owner of the designated mouth which receives thy lovely *probably overdeveloped through Fiber intervention lesser-vestibular-gland's* release, I'd say a *pretty damn good one*. It shall be a most welcome event upon return from our jaunt to explain to thee the wonders to be discovered within oils on canvass."

Having been discovered the tables had been turned too fast to

register. Fully breaking down her consciousness into a deep internal processing of how she had lost the element of surprise *that fast*.

"The car will be around soon to pick us up, I take it you still have shoes to don?"

Silence held as she continued thinking to the point her fibers were starting to get leveraged.

"You know for such a hyper-sexual individual thy mind crashes rather easily when faced with the sudden prospect of such doesn't it?"

"H-How?"

Shaking her head with a smile she walked back over to direct a glowing Ryuko along into her heels for the last leg of their evening out together.

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A couple hours later found Ryuko blankly staring at a square canvas splashed with varying colors hanging on an otherwise blank white wall, in an otherwise blank white room, boredom levels near *critical mass*. Even mentally commanding her liver to entirely shut down for the evening had done nothing to improve the effects of several drained champagne flutes returned to servers with red stains. Standing next to her and marveling at the *raw feeling* on display in the piece Satsuki glanced to her left about to question what feelings Ryuko might have been reading, before reading the emotion emanating off Ryuko herself.

She *had* been rather unusually quiet for the last forty minutes on reflection, no longer giving her own little blunt comments on this and that artwork or other patron's outfit. With a desire to understand *why* Satsuki shuffled over and behind her to put chin on her shoulder, arms wrapping around waist while taking a lungful of her upturned hair's scent with a hum. Eye cracking open after noting a change from her usual. Polite whispers going back and forth below ambient piano tunes to not disturb the large room's handful of other guests.

"You've changed bath *aid*?"

Hands pulled out of pockets found their way to rest over Satsuki's. Welcome to any break in the boredom.

"Found the most hilariously named one the other day, figured it'd be worth a shot."

"How did I miss this all day? *Do tell.*"

"*Snuggle Exhilarations.* Either it's working or are you gettin touchy for another reason? *Is it exhilarating~?*"

"My dear your skin fills with raw *exhilaration* every time you have a *lewd thought*, you don't need help with *that~*. You looked positively crushed by this piece, I simply wished to know why it affected you so greatly as apposed to the hundreds before it."

"The people who made these things might be okay and interesting, but Eyebrows all this shits making me rethink is potential *immortality.*"

"Not the plethora of expressions buried within this painting?"

"*It should be buried alright.*"

"Really? It honestly evokes that much pure *hostility* from you? Intriguing~."

"No, that comes from being near permanently unable to get *pure buzzed* on anything short of *fuel grade* anymore even after turning parts of myself off."

"Please don't drastically mess with your more standard internal components especially in public, you should know by now that normal organs were never meant to start and stop haphazardly. *Especially* after the last time you came crying to me in *swollen-mammary-induced-pain.*"

"*W-We agreed to n-never speak about that... incident.*"

"*And yet you've still done it twice~.* You have to admit from a certain point of view it was an *interesting* week."

"*...Can we not?*"

"Right, right. Concentrate. What does this piece actually say to you? It must elicit *some* kind of feelings in you surely?"

"I guess it could give us some warmth if we burned it."

"*Don't be rude,* I was being serious and people are staring."

"Nobody can hear us, they're staring because yer nuzzling the shit out of my hair *in public*. If my ears are still workin right some of them are not exactly *fans* of us being... *us.*"

"*Oh but I like your head my dear~.* It's positively filled with your essence and those trace feelings that come from your inner existence. If they don't like it that's *their damn problem, not mine.*"

"If you want to plant yer nose on some hair so bad I can allow my pubes to grow again."

"...What did I say about being crude?"

"What ya gonna do about it~?"

"If you're going to weaponize hair then I can conveniently not have time to shave my legs for a while. We are in the middle of several important agendas after all."

"Y-You wouldn't!?"

"Mmm, try me~. Skirts and dresses are all fine and dandy, but I can quite readily do without."

"B-But..."

"Back to the art then?"

"...Modern is stupid. It's all nonsense that anyone can do and then they sell it on the bullshit the same fuck made before while depressed or on drugs or something."

"Might I remind you that your own work is considered *modern*?"

"My works out of this world. Pretty much zero other people can do it."

"While the structure is *definitely unique* the designs are entirely from your *oh-so-very-odd-human-mind*. So half true. If you won't tell me what you find striking in this painting shall we continue our perusal to the others?"

"...Why here?"

"Art is food for the soul *heavens knows we could use all the help we can get there...* Besides you're already going to ensure neither of us gets any proper rest tonight regardless of how long we stay here or anywhere else *I'm sure of it.*"

"B-But you--"

"That wasn't to say I wouldn't start as soon as the door shut behind us and happily accept being on my back for several hours enjoying *the fuck out of* being ground into the mattress~. *Later.* For now we shall continue our study."

Moving off Ryuko's back with a kiss on her neck Satsuki linked arms to start walking them through the building's fourteenth floor. Passing groups significantly thinner than those far below filled with more socialites than actual art. Smiling when a faint

whine was just audible over the murmuring crowds as she turned them toward stairs going up.

"Alas I might shed a tear, for there is just one more floor to explore my dear. You have naught to fear, for rest assured the end of artistic exploration is in fact near~."

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Stepping out into the night relief was flooding from Ryuko's intertwined fingers. Steps returning to their energetic self as they approached the curb to wait for their pick up. Turning to lightly peck a rapidly dusting cheek Satsuki ignored the odd stare and phone camera click from passers by. Smiling upwards and swinging their joined hands back and forth a little without a care in the world.

"I know that you didn't particularly enjoy much of today, but I thank you from the bottom of my heart for doing this. It was a pleasant day and celebration of life that I've not experienced for *many* years. And an age not even three years ago I honestly thought I might never reach. Time given to me *really* by you. Time now made ever more precious by your presence... It's safe to assume we should be able to handle birthdays."

"...Still say a boat coulda been nice."

"Fufufu~. For another time. Maybe next year when things are less hectic."

"Uhh... Sats?"

"Hmm?"

"Is that *our* ride coming up? Cause it sure as fuck looks like we own it."

Turning gaze back down to the street she picked out the approaching vehicle with wide eyes. Rolling down the street and coming to a halt in front of them was a black Komatsu LAV. Hood emblazoned with the Nudist's banner. Front passenger door opening for a heavily kitted out Inumuta to step out and snap a tired salute. Black military field uniform disheveled and covered in various shiny stains. Smelling hints of diesel, sweat, and oil Ryuko gave him a hard stare before moving to fiddle with a rear passenger door.

"Houka?"

"Nerd what the fuck is with the commando getup, you almost look competent for once- *Fiber fucking*- How the fuck do I open this?"

Turning on his combat-booted heel he moved over to pop open the metal block of a door and motioned them inside. Stepping back into the front passenger position next to Gamagori he signaled the larger man to proceed. Engine roaring as the two women settled into hanging seats.

"Might we receive an explanation Inumuta? Specifically on why you pulled armor out of the garage without first notifying *I assume* either of us?"

"Toad got into town today so we decided to pull some items out of mothball ma'am, just some routine maintenance that held us up with some er complications. Nothing major to worry about."

"*Mmmhmm...* In town so soon Ira?"

"Lady Satsuki I am wherever I am needed! Jakuzure informed me that there was a general launch meeting to attend and I plan to make myself available for any project in need! I apologize that we were unable to complete our personal task and return to central to change vehicles."

"Oi, *complications*? You're covered in everything from oil to anti-freeze did you tear this fucker down in a Fiber damn parking lot?"

"Um, yes actually."

"...You fucks forgot to drain and replace fluids after letting this thing sit forever didn't you?"

Both men up front shared a quick look before sinking in their seats.

"I'll give it a full once over before sending it for repainting tomorrow Lady Ryuko, on my honor!"

"Why bother honestly. There a reason to even keep these things?"

"*Better to have and not need, then need and not have* Imouto."

Trying to keep her smile Satsuki thanked them for turning up even after adverse situations transpired. Grasping Ryuko's hand to rub circles with her thumb until she settled down with a blush as well. Staring out a small door window to watch the many lights of downtown flash by while her mind turned back to agonizing over how she was going to ask Ryuko to save her war.

Again.

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Days later in the middle of a quiet Sunday morning found them sitting on the couch in a now regular position. One sitting up fully with her legs crossed under her, controller in hand, and laser focus on the television creating blooms of color fighting some imaginary monstrosities with a stick that shoots fire. The other leaning against her sideways on their seat with a book in hand and living warmth provider curled into her lap. Occasionally putting her hands and the bottom of said book into the red material to feel little movements every time she turned a page. This peace was broken when Ryuko shifted up in her seat with a jerk.

"Something wrong?"

The world of magic froze into a grayed out pause screen. In the quiet she started feeling a muted buzzing instead of an answer. Sitting up herself she watched Ryuko sink a hand into her shirt and bones to pull out the item responsible. Frustratingly fumbling with it as usual until she finally got to her messages.

"Ah, delivery."

"Of?"

Pulling out her key fob she pressed a button before vaulting over the couch's back. bouncing out on toes into the hall with a "you'll see." Following after individual bouncing off walls to cover distance faster Satsuki caught up at the front door. Watching a rounded item with wheels covered in cloth getting unloaded into their driveway off the back of a ramp truck. Pink haired woman directing the scene as the thing was rolled firmly on the ground. Unhooking the mass from whatever cable was used to lower it down she waved the driver an all clear and closed the sliding gate behind the truck after it left.

Ryuko was upon the thing in two leaping steps. Poking around it while undoing ties holding the tarp down. Pulling it free and tossing it up over her back with a flutter onto nearby grass she opened the passenger side door and ducked to hop inside. Crawling around the interior while Satsuki approached the black car. Tail still happily swirling around, barely visible through the thing's relatively narrow tinted windows. Both other women walking up to peek inside looking confused.

"Good morning Nonon. Could you please explain why you have deposited such a thing onto our property?"

"She wanted it... w-what i-is that?"

Shifting back over the red leather bench seat Ryuko rolled down a window to cross her arms on the door and rest her head on it. Narrowing her eyes at Nonon while she pointed at her.

"Pinky?"

"...R-Red."

"Problem?"

"...Is t-that a-"

"What about it?"

She continued to stare at the mesmerizing thing going from side to side. Carefully thinking through her available responses before speaking.

"It- You-... had ears. Which apparently comes with a... *huh*. Vixen."

"Oi."

"Animalia, Chordata, Synapsida, Mammalia, Carnivora, Caniformia, Canidae, Vulpes, Vulpes vulpes. Female, vixen. Omnivore. Tends to form mated pairs, lives at odds with human society, prized for looks, famous for cunning, tend to roam long distances with no fixed territory unless able to establish a den in an area, said areas usually located in dense foliage or woodland as is surrounding your house, populations have been found to include occasions of incest- have been noted to live in suburbia, communicate with body language and an advanced vocal range, has been observed with ability to discern the earth's magnetic field while hunting birds possibly more still being studied. In myth some unearthly Kitsune take human form to either mess with people or on rare occasion to become loyal friends, compassionate lovers, or devoted wives... Fox."

"...huh?"

"Biology, mythology, your life's story. Think about it for a while. Satsuki I was told to find a car so I did."

Looking it over from the side it had a wedged front end flanked with wheel-well fenders and headlight pods. Rear swept back from shoulder height roof down past embedded rear wells to its bumper. It was substantially larger than the last vehicle Ryuko took an interest in. Future operator's face lighting up more when a pair of keys was deposited into her hands.

"It run? Things in here feel linked up."

"No those just go to the locks and ignition on the dashboard. The bodywork is all done but the engine is still in a crate over the pacific. Should be here in a few days. Toad almost cried when I told him your instructions to chop the roof. Might have hurt him a little on the inside like the big softy he is. Mellowed out when the suspension was in properly and he could look at it. Now I'm supposed to tell you... *what was it...* The wheels are aligned, wiring for signals is in, power is live with battery in the trunk, roofs all new fab, full upholstery is in, front parts are ready to drop the motor in however you do that, and if the paint so much as gets a scratch don't hesitate to call."

"He'll stop cryin when it's done eventually. Hey Nee-san, *sensible* enough for you?"

"Why does this thing look like you two pulled it from Casablanca?"

"Don't look at me I just fulfill orders... *It is kinda swank though.* Well I have things to do so..."

"Are you sure you can't stay for lunch?"

"Yeah, monkey's flying in and someone needs to haul his ass out of the airport. I drew the short straw *yey me.*"

Seeing her off Satsuki came back to lean on the available space on the door. Smiling as Ryuko continued to try moving around in the driver's seat until she gave up and pulled the tail back in.

"Not a bad catch eyebrows, *that* was a forty phaeton stripped down to remove it's Buick badges in the movie. This is a thirty-seven special. Been custom cut and re-profiled, but still mostly one minus the modern additions like radio an cameras. Solid all steel body and gonna roar like a tiger when it's rolling down highways. The sport's nice but for long drives that rattle is gonna get really tiring really fast."

"My dear if this was marginally larger it would be a limo. May I?"

"Get in here Brows. Future traveling in *style.*"

Getting inside and closing the long door behind her the front had a significant amount of room and glancing back she saw the equally spacious rear bench seat.

"I take it back this *is* a limo."

"Not really, parking anywhere without planning *will* be an absolute bitch though. Got a trunk big enough to fit like three people in behind the seats as well."

"There was a door back there?"

"Well hidden but yeah. It's gonna need work to get running, and it's gonna take a lot of effort to keep running, but it's worth it."

"Especially when you're not the one paying for it~?"

"Bah, not as much as you think. Big guy only charges cost cause I made him charge *something*. What do ya think?"

Shifting over she leaned her head on Ryuko's shoulder and stared out the front windshield down the hood. Picking out little colored light prisms glancing off the silver-chrome line running down to a hood ornament capping it's end. Red and black interior warm from the sun beating down on mirror black paint. Reaching forward she smiled at the yellow glow that came up when she turned a knob on the radio face. Rich sound coming forth from some station picking up English and guitar possibly set last by Gamagori when checking installation.

"I'm sure you will make it wonderful. You always do. Always find a way eventually even when things are bleak."

"Might need help putting it in order. Only have one set of eyes and I am *not* fucking around making more. Having four ears on occasion is already confusing as fuck. What's so bleak? It's just a project. Won't really change anything in the day to day unless you actually hated the other car... d-did you?"

"No, that little four-wheeled trooper has done it's duty time and time again soldiering through the punishment and orders you command of it. And the front looks like it's smiling when the lights are up~."

"It handles like a sport bike and your big compliment is that it looks *happy*? Nee-san you sure you're not going too soft on me?"

"This coming from the person that can make herself softer than the finest pillows~?"

"You already treat me like one. Figure I could play the part at least."

"Fufufu~. Is it a problem?"

"Not even fucking close to one."

An arm found it's way around her shoulder. Head falling to the side to rest on her own.

"...You've said you don't deserve me... I don't deserve you Imouto."

"Why the fuck do you think that?"

"...I... have not been *entirely* honest with you for the last few weeks..."

"That? I know."

She shifted up in her seat in surprise. Staring up at a face that lazily turned toward her carrying weighty eyes but a half smile.

"You-..."

"It's about the trip right?"

"Y-Yes. You... When?"

"Since the moment you brought it up. I'm the one that decides to do shit spur of the moment. It was so random, so left field, that there *just had* to be a reason behind it. Takarada slighted us somehow or something?"

"You-... Yes. He did... If you knew, why haven't you said anything!?"

"I figure if you need me to do something you'll tell me. Don't wanna fuck up whatever it is you're planing."

"...And that's it? If I told you we needed to burn that place down to the ground, you'd have just done it no question?"

"Now I didn't say *that*. But you don't usually do shit *just because*. Now *I* don't even know what I'm really doing by next week. Hell tomorrow is always just a rough idea on the horizon the night before. I just follow the corporate schedule. The one *you* made. Believe me if at any time I felt like there was a better path to follow I would have fucking called you out for being a dumbass on the spot. I'm just happy to follow a road Sats. If someone told me I'd have a roof over my head, a fiber damn stable *job* of all things with like a desk and shit, and a warm bed every-night that comes with a clingy woman who can't get enough of holding onto me... I'd have decked them in the face for making fun of me. It's ordinary-*ish*, it's stable, it's... It's *nice*... shit happens sometimes, yeah. But there's still nowhere else I'd rather be."

"...Even if that road would cross the law?"

"It's been a while since I've had to get cops off my ass, but if you think it's necessary I'm pretty much a secret weapon for that kinda stuff. Letting you do stupid shit on your own would be making it too easy for your ass to land in the clink. Or worse... And then what would *I* do with myself every-night~? Alone... Nah if we're going to maximum security we're going together, and then maybe having the best prison break of all time where we ride off

into the sunset by raft and live our lives on a world expedition.
Live like spies."

"I'm fairly certain there is no authority that can send us to Alcatraz Ryuko."

"There's still no prison on earth that could hold us anyway."

"Small comfort in the face of losing everything."

"Which is why we don't fuck up right?"

"*Right.*"

"I'm still gonna be here, with you, being me. If you need anything else, just *wake me when you need me.*"

"...Thank you. Imouto."

Slumping back down with her eyes closed her arms found there way around Ryuko to hug her midsection while she slid down to land fast first in her lap. Deciding she was going to kiss Ryuko wherever her head lay she pressed lips to the first spot she could reach. Opening them when heat started building around her to realize her face had in fact come down on a dreadfully short skirt. Face to face with some small panties that had been chosen for their lack of material in places to allow one tail freedom of movement. Turning slightly she saw Ryuko's confused face and the wheel above her on the other side.

"*Fufufu~... If I am not mistaken the term is road-head?*"

"*Uhh... W-we're not-... um...*"

"It's idiotic to do such a thing while driving. Too distracting."

"*L-Little bit.*"

"*Mmm.* Could you move a little forward?"

"W-Why?"

"Because Kiryuin Satsuki finishes what she starts~."

"...T-That's gonna fuck up the seat if we do that here."

"Do you doubt my ability to suck you dry?"

"I... *Maybe?*"

"Well, I guess there's nothing else for it. Spread those knees Imouto, *I'm just going to have to prove you wrong~.*"

Chapter End Notes

Might have been rushed a little, got a little too long as well, actually had a deadline to meet though. If the dates recorded are right this marks one full year of having no idea what I'm doing but posting anyway!

Kinda feel like I need to go back and redo the first few chapters of the first part now that standards have risen from *nigh-impossible to follow* to *some people might actually understand what's going on*. Maybe when it's done.

Time flies. Anyway things are still coming along to an end slowly but surely. Hopefully before the next year comes around... Still four maybe five chapters left. Fingers crossed.

Billy Joel - She's always a woman to me

Red's Seven

Chapter Summary

“I thank you all for coming, the meeting will be in the main conference room after eleven. Please be prepared beforehand. Houka?”

“If I may. Will this be a war meeting?”

“Yes... Ready?”

Chapter Notes

Standard disclaimer that this is a long one.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Blinds had been lowered all along the outward facing glass wall of the main conference room. Early summer heat pushing the building's air conditioning to noticeable levels. Attempting to tune out the drone of fans Ryuko was massively bored. To do anything she decided to pass the time before the *war room meeting* by evaluating the collection of threads around her instead of paying attention to whatever *meeting-bullshit-papers* were in front of her.

Undaunted by the abnormally warm early June weather Nee-san was prim and proper as ever at the head of the black rock slab she called a *proper* conference table. *Oh but what lewd items lie beneath the surface.* Down the left hand side of the room Iori had left his own brown jacket from this morning in his office, also probably scolding himself while fingering the hem of his brown vest. *Hot, elevated heart rate, in need of re-hydrating.* To his left Inumuta had taken full advantage of his server side job description to pull out sandals, shorts, and an *absurdly ugly* Hawaiian t-shirt starched at the collar to cover his neck. Tapping away on his *stupid laptop* doing something official or... *something.* Maybe figuring out the next iteration of his coolant pack conceived of back in school. *Unusually nervous, elevated rate. Why?* Next in line was Gamagori who actually showed up to a meeting for once. At least he was useful on occasion around town and the property instead of distracting Mako while she was getting an honest to Fiber college degree, slowly but surely. *Comically* stuffed into a full gray suit otherwise not a hair out of place he

was visibly struggling not to chastise most everyone else's *less-than-professional* appearance, or let his forehead drip onto the table. *Which he was doing anyway.* Rounding out the line Uzu was in a similar state of mind as *nerd-two*, casual jeans and shirt loose enough that when Ira got tired of him spinning his squeaky chair around in circles he was able to grab a handful of it and force the man to sit still.

Across from them always at Nee-sans right hand, and abusing the technical right to wear whatever she wanted to the office no matter how many times she got nagged about it, Ryuko took the heat excuse to wear exactly three pieces of clothing. One gray sun dress full of geometric holes and two matching modest heels with open toes.

To her right a small war was playing out. Nonon was grumpily drumming fingers onto the table and frowning in corporate casual wear. The reason for her agitation sitting to her own right constantly trying to pick at the buttons on his shirt and pants. Sick of it after a few minutes Nonon stomped his foot under the table when it strayed too close to her leg. Trying to play it off with a wince he shrugged while throwing a look to the silver haired stoic woman next to him in some plain office wear, who completely ignored him much to Uzu's quiet enjoyment.

Sighing when *the children* finally settled down Satsuki clapped her hands to start the meeting officially. Folders full of departmental information halfheartedly thumbed through around the room closed and dropped on the table.

"Thank you *all* for coming today, I realize gathering here in central can put a strain on your individual schedules and the effort is appreciated. Let's go from the top down the checklist, Jakuzure?"

"Warehouses stocked, general supply lines moving, backroom supply is getting stockpiled, off site sales unhindered and still proceeding smoothly Lady Satsuki."

"Keep it that way. Gamagori?"

"Ma'am last three forklifts cleared and delivered to warehouse two. One truck in the middle of an engine rebuild estimated done by tomorrow morning. Fourteen cleared through general maintenance. All else running on schedule Lady Satsuki."

"Get it done. Inumuta?"

"Security running all greens with no incidences at any property. Online there have been a handful of attempts to pierce into external facing networks but none of them have made any real progress, they also shouldn't know that I know what they are trying so I've been leading them in circles. Otherwise all systems

go Ma'am."

"If anything comes up ensure it get's handled and a proper notification sent up the chain. Hoomaru?"

"Green and blue departments reported shelves ready and beginning to receive stock this morning. Full displays as the next two weeks progress. Plenty of breathing room in the projected market-share limit to accommodate even a best case scenario double in product moving off shelves. Bulk of deemed *unnecessary* personal properties have been sold, proceeds allocated as directed. I'll have the paperwork you requested within days ma'am."

"I'll expect them. Iori?"

"All four sales floors of Black label fully prepared to receive shelves as planned. Sales staff and tailors will be done with preliminary training on schedule. Executive work suite will be up and running for custom tailored orders by launch ma'am."

"Be ready for anything. Of all the orders we could fill custom suits might be useful for earning some goodwill among the corporate class. Mister Mikisugi, how goes surveillance?"

"General readiness remains at minimal operations. Sensor nets fully operational over Asia, Europe, Africa, North and Central America. South American towers will be ready within the week, rough seas delayed final part shipments--"

"I told you to send it by air pervy-teacher."

"And deal with moving large quantities of metal and kind of secret electronics through international airports? *Heavens no*. Would have gone *far* over budget in cost and bribes to secure it that way Miss Jakuzure."

"Stay on topic people."

"*Sorry ma'am.*"

"Always *Missus Director*~. The network will be fully online soon enough, not a peep from anything else to warrant rushing it. The special projects division isn't having the same luck unfortunately. Heavy model defense powered armor frames have been broken more than they've been running. No compounds have managed to successfully harm fiber samples to a degree we could use in effective defensive weapons either."

"So long as the situation remains the same we have time to let research and development work so long as it stays within the provided budget. Priority is *Cradle*."

"*The big headache*. Prototypes for space probes are all showing

significant hardware failure in launch conditions testing. The equipment is just too sensitive to survive the forces involved, and it's not a field I'm personally able to throw myself into and expect results. We are not going to have them ready anytime soon."

"Keep work on it going as best as can be expected. I'm sure I don't need to explain to anyone present why we need better eyes pointing toward the stars functioning as soon as possible."

"We'll pull something at least bare-bones together I'm sure. Software is ready to roll out, *the hardware is coming don't you worry-.*"

"Mister Mikisugi do we need to have *another* nice little *chat* about what is *appropriate workplace behavior?*"

"Nooo ma'am. N-No need to hurl more chairs. Message loud and clear!"

"Moving on, Sanageyama how is security holding up with refresher rotations?"

"If you gave the word, and we had the supplies, I'd give us pretty good odds taking over some small countries by now. *Not* that we would of course. But we *could* if you wanted to."

"Once again Uzu we are not going to invade Hong Kong and set up an underground government based on *martial arts prowess*. The people would revolt, the UN would be angry, China would be furious, and I *really* don't need *more* reasons for people to distrust us."

"I understand Lady Satsuki, *it would just be so cool...*"

"No. Will they be able to defend us from *typical terrestrial aggression?*"

"Anything short of *the ass-kicking-highness herself* won't get anywhere close to being a problem ma'am."

"Continue keeping our security in shape. Which leaves us last but not least with the ever complicated Red department, how goes- *Ryuko?*"

People around the table had been avoiding the reclining woman's skin rather openly displayed and only now realized the chair she had just been lounging in was empty. Turning around Satsuki found the door was in fact closed. She'd noted Ryuko's head rocking from side to side not even a minute ago from the corner of her eye. No one had seen her leave. Forehead in hand she sighed.

"*Houka?*"

"Ma'am?"

"Please locate mine AWOL roaming responsibility."

Switching from market news feeds to security feeds he cross referenced locations with fiber activity monitors located throughout the building. Pulling up the board room's two cameras in particular and rewinding back five minutes. Ryuko's sudden pop into nonexistence lighting up his face. Rubbing his hands together with interest he pulled any possibly relevant video segments up to be ripped apart for clues.

"At forty-five frames per second each camera is purposely calibrated to be off sync to ensure maximum coverage throughout the building while minimizing data storage costs. While I can only see a ghosting distortion moving along she definitely managed to get from this room to the south stairwell without any of them getting a solid shot of her moving. Pulling up the internal monitors there is a slight path of elevated energy readings running from here down to floor--"

"Dog stop stroking your ego and get to the point."

"Patience snake, I was getting to it. Now if we just pull up thermal imaging and check the floor for contact points--"

Before he could get any serious results back a doorknob clicked. Everyone turning to watch Ryuko casually stroll in carrying two paper boxes flat on her arms and kicking the door closed behind her. Plopping them onto the table in the middle of several silent stares she popped one open, pulled out two doughnuts, and gently placed one onto Satsuki's accusatory raised pointer finger before she could speak. Taking her seat again she bit into her own frosted ring. Stopping when Nee-san hadn't moved, six other people were just blinking at her, and *captain nipples* was trying very hard not to bust out laughing.

"It's Wednesday, we get these delivered in my wing... I brought enough for everyone? S-Stop lookin at me like a fat fuck. I can burn four thousand calories a day, fuck off and worry about your own asses!"

Those faces only turned when Satsuki finally moved. Expected scathing yells for breaking protocol didn't come down though. Instead she thoroughly investigated the item that had been deposited on her hand. Moving it toward her face to take a small exploratory bite she sat quietly mulling it over. Moving her hand she lightly flicked the thing up to catch with a proper grasp and took a full bite.

"Tea flavored?"

"You know that tiny bakery a few blocks over from the house? I

order like seventeen dozen every week so they fill a box with literally anything I ask for personally on top for free. Even weird stuff they won't sell otherwise cause it's too small a market for them to devote the sales counter space."

"And that fits in your department budget?"

"Supplies is supplies. Forgot I had some set aside on my desk until a minute ago."

"Mmmhmm... Thus thy contributions to mine diet grow ever more unhealthy."

"You've eaten nothing but salad and fish for three fuckin days. You'll be fine even if you *live a little*."

"Whatever you say dear~. Mystery solved, back to business everyone."

One by one they slowly started taking pastries to nibble. No one willing to admit they were eventually enjoying the change from varying similar *all serious* meetings years ago.

"Continuing, how comes progress Ryuko?"

"On?"

"...Your department?"

"Oh, everything's fine enough."

"Any... Issues? Specifics that would be worth bringing up. Details?"

"Nothin worth mentioning really."

"Holy- Red is your *stuff* ready in the store or not!?"

"Oi, we've *been* ready for weeks. All the racks are plastic wrapped to catch dust, display mannequins are set up, fitting booths furnished on all four floors, supply's climate control is already in full swing to keep fully loaded storage as is, private design office is stocked for when I get around to using it eventually... *If I do it*... Every pencil, panty bin, and pin is waiting for the big *opening shindig reveal day thing*. I thought everyone else's shit was late?"

Once again a wave of stone expressions went around the table. Even managing to raise an eyebrow from Satsuki this time.

"Ryuko, even the most generous schedules placed us only *just* making the deadlines."

"You said June. It's *June*. We're ready."

"*End of June*. How on Earth have you possibly accomplished this *early*?"

"Deadline came down and it was gonna be rough. So rounded everyone up on one floor and held a general meeting that no one could leave until we hammered a timetable out. *Took five hours but...* We got it. Night shift helped."

"...Night shift? *Night shift...* Aside from security we don't have a night shift. Are you paying people overtime off the books?"

"Nah, it's just volunteers."

Now even Mikisugi was interested in what she had been doing with her department. Stares continued until most present shouted out at once, "*What!?!*" Surprise making Ryuko almost drop a second half-eaten disk of dough in her hand.

"*Fucking Fiber damn it* can you calm your tits people!? There's a calendar pinned on the office cork board. Anyone that wanted to work nights across the street to make things nice just signed up on the sheet under it every month and we organized days to get people going together. Couple papers put up by others for carpools, personal ads, break room shit, events... That kinda regular *office junk*, at least I think that's... I-look I don't know this shit okay it's not like my work experience *remotely* covered any of this... Is there something on my face?"

Having left the minutia of ordinary day to day operation to middle management's capable hands Satsuki was utterly *fascinated* at the thought of Ryuko forgoing the opportunity to do the same and actually managing her whole department *directly* instead. Nudging her chair over, she folded her arms onto the desk and leaned forward around the corner.

"I gave you managers if I recall to run things so that you could work more effectively on your *actual* work designing products."

"Wasn't it just for paperwork? I make them do that shit while getting things done like you said to. I tell people what needs doing, it gets done."

"No chain of command? Just straight top and work force?"

"Y-Yes? I mean I'm part of the work force. Is that not... allowed? Did I fuck up?"

"No, no, noooo! *It's just...* That's just unexpected. Could you explain what that entails for me my dear?"

"Uhh, My assholes make designs in teams, I give it the thumbs up

or down for the display wall where everyone gives constructive shit talking for a week. Then it either goes back to the team for revision or if it comes out good we get production patterns figured out and fit it somewhere in the line. Everyone cares about the work, hell everyone's kinda working together all the time. Which is why I asked them to set up the displays. *Who else would be best to make them other than the original designers who give the most fucks?* Lot of ideas come from inspiration, the original envisioning is the best way to show them off."

"You are aware that we have a marketing department that's in charge of doing all the front end sales design work? They were in charge of planning the layout of the floors."

"And? They're a bunch of pricks that are constantly annoying me about having a *social media presence* and, and *being natural for once so we can sell your down to earth side!* I don't have a stupid natural side but it's not like I can tell them that!"

She was no longer slouching back into her chair. Food eaten her hands began animatedly moving. Starting with a grab at some of the red translucent strands all over her head.

"Hair dye literally rolls off this shit like water off a duck, believe me I tried for years. I can't hide it unless I go full blonde and then it's *all* fibers in a way... Then I'm attracting attention for a whole other reason... So I don't let the guys from sales anywhere near my office, Red floors, or anything at all that has to do with our work. Every team that get's put together has one or two people with some idea how to frame productions on a model, they put packets together that tell the marketing people what to put in the ad. We tell them what to do, they shut up and do it. It's worked so far."

"Marketing is bothering you to the point you organized your own part-time *sub department*?"

"It's not really a department, just voluntary positions. As it is I don't have to directly talk with anyone outside Red and there's no long ass bureaucratic nonsense with shit getting sent back and forth and back and forth up and down the building... that's just *stupid* and a complete waste of time! Right now we handle all the bullshit directly in a day at most when needed every few weeks. It let us follow the time table to be ready across the street now. I mean fuck I was thinking of giving everyone a day off or start working on the fall shit."

"...People just volunteer to do work outside what we hired them to do? Because you ask them to? And out of all that your department still functions with the rest of this company not noticing the changes you've been making?"

"Yes? I don't know... Ask *them*?"

"Okay... Anything else you want to notify me of?"

"Not right now really."

"You direct over two hundred people without any computers. *Personally*. And you have no other problems aside from *standard industry practices* being... *not efficient enough*?"

"I guess?"

"Hoomaru?"

"Already on it milady. Changes by tomorrow."

"Did we cover everything Shiro?"

"I do believe so if *that's all*..."

"What time is it?"

"*Um*, twelve forty-five?"

"Thank you. And thank you all for coming, given that we have already started eating in here... Ryuko would you be so kind as to organize some lunch for us? You've already delivered dessert. *Please~?*"

She sighed before shrugging her shoulders and getting up again.

"Everyone good with like *fuck I don't know*... sandwiches?"

.
.

Lab-technician, managerial assistant, and blonde tailor electing to leave for their work let everyone left have a bit more room to eat after Ryuko dragged in several bags from the front desk. Minor conversations flowing.

"Turkey and honey-ham?"

"You said whatever and it looked decent, just eat."

"It's too much, here."

Splitting the long sandwich in two she placed half onto Ryuko's place already occupied with two full ones like it and the wrapper from the one she was almost finished with already. Protesting she was going to push it back over but Satsuki actually started eating what she had kept without any other complaints. Sighing she just

picked it up and started devouring it as well. Occasionally shooting glares at the *nerd* across the table trying very hard to study how she tore through food with her teeth.

"What?"

"Stop."

"I'm just conducting an observation is that so wrong?"

"It's creepy as fuck!"

"It is purely for scientific study of other theoretical Fiber based hybrid life forms I assure you."

"Which won't be happening. So it's not needed. *So, stop.*"

Eventually he turned his attention to his own food. Frowning until he started trying to figure out whatever information he could on the pig the ham came from. Some minutes later Satsuki snapped her fingers and made a motion toward the man while she swallowed her last bite.

"Ma'am?"

"While I have you here I wanted to know how the paperwork for the Osaka trip is coming along."

Wiping his hands clean with a napkin he pulled his laptop back toward himself. Opening it up to access some particular folders he had prepared in advance.

"Written correspondence has gone back and forth successfully. I've got all the needed requests and forms together as well. Shall I have them printed up for your review?"

"Yes, thank you."

As predicted Ryuko groaned at the topic.

"You know that it's important, we have to go into that *palace of filth* prepared for battle."

"Funny way to call a casino."

"*Oh it's worse than just a gambling house.* It's more of an unsavory *institution* than that. Closer to those places from the various heist movies we've watched I guess."

"Considering I'm supposed to own the stuff we're going to claim it's not exactly an operation. *Y-You're also significantly easier on the eyes than a wrinkly Sinatra.*"

"*Mmm*, what if it was though? Do you think we could pull it off?"

"Rob *ginger-the-kid* blind? Fuck yeah. *Easy*."

As planned everyone else at the table, those who were in on the operation, perked up to pay attention when the planned conversation began. Lady Satsuki's orders to follow her lead as needed.

"I'm not so sure about that, he might not be good company but he ran the most successful defensive bastion in this country during the war. He also still owns that city. Breaking in the front door to take his gold probably wouldn't work out."

Readjusting his glasses Houka started pulling up more from the depths of his laptop.

"If I may interject, his funds are stored in much more than just precious metals. The majority of it is tied up in various accounts. If you wanted to take it all you would need to gain access to his computers."

"Computers? Where's the fun in stealing a laptop? Couldn't you just hack or *whatever it is you do to his shit* from anywhere or something then?"

"It's much more difficult than that. His central network is closed to an internal ecosystem and all outward facing potential access points are buried under quite a few defensive protection layers that could take centuries of computation time to crack into. The only realistic option would be directly plugging into a physical machine on the network itself."

"An how do you know that nerd?"

"Blueprints. Design documentation. A little common sense."

Typing away he dimmed the room's lights and started a projector pointing to the blank wall usually used for presentations. 3D wire model of an opulent high rise ready to be studied in an *unusual format* that was asked for but ready nonetheless. Getting up Ryuko walked over to the wall *beyond* curious to look at it. Satsuki's shoulders tensing up as she stared at the woman's bare upper back. Time was running out and this was their best shot.

She finally smiled when red light started burning to life at the woman's nape.

Interest piqued, fueled to the point that she is actually using all her available thinking space, and fanned till she cared to make it work. Perfect.

"*Ain't that familiar*. Why the fuck do you have this?"

"Public knowledge. I just pulled up a copy from the Osaka rebuild records. Following the discussion your biggest issue would be finding the physical location of the servers and getting to them."

"*Big ass jigsaw puzzle ain't it...* Hey nerd can you to flash each floor for three seconds with a single one-eighty rotation?"

"Of course."

As asked all fifty floors separated on the green and black screen. Each one expanded to be brought forward one after another. Blinking any known power, water, and general structural details at a speed beyond the rest of the room's capacity to follow. Satsuki's smile growing behind her folded hands as the fictional *Fox commander* came to life before their very eyes with a snort.

"Faster. From the top down shit's missing all over the place."

"As you wish, I've taken a partial interest into the building because of that. Strange lack of detail in a lot of the paperwork."

As frames flashed by she started pointing in seemingly random directions. Again and again asking him to repeat the loop faster. After ten minutes of this she told him to stop.

"Put this shit back together. The fucker built a Fiber damn vertical fort. Twenty probable armories, three separate redundant power systems, and a defensive hard room every five floors starting from the circular bubble hanging down from the fifth. Floors are probably concrete themselves, every one is triple beamed with steel. Walls have metal plate cores. Doors are pretty heavy too. Would need a lot of plastic to blast through this place in good time... There's no way from the front door. Maybe a midnight op around back would work."

"Apologies dear, but I'm afraid I'm not following you. What is this *midnight op*?"

Still looking at the screen Ryuko explained.

"Literally what it says. Strike at midnight or some other *odd hour* when the majority of the defense will be asleep and unavailable to fight. It's a hell of a lot easier to deal with camera's and turrets than meat-bags slingin rifles and grenades."

"Wouldn't that attract significant unwanted attention? I'm sure the second an intrusion gets noticed security would begin locking the whole building down physically. Calling out to any possible reinforcements from private contractors and the city police. Direct military action would be suicide. Too risky to open a firefight in the middle of a city as well. It would be significantly easier to do an insertion job and blend with the

staff no? Distractions and operatives working in tandem."

"Well yeah guns blazing would be stupid. That's why you avoid all of the shit and just take the easy route."

"...Easy?"

"Yeah. Targets big computer room right? Zoom in on the top twenty floors glasses."

Done as requested Houka zoomed in on the top half of the building. She then pointed to a particular spot at a corner of four interior walls.

"Big ass computers need cooling right? We've got that shit. So does he. It's the only set of pipes not heading to ground level which means it's an independent loop. They run from the roof down sixteen floors alongside an elevator to this single reinforced spot that coincidentally is the only one that doesn't have a water line heading down the building."

"And the significance of that is?"

"No way for there to be a bathroom. No rich asshole would lock himself into a room for hours on end waiting for backup without a proper shitter. Which means this room out of all the possible little defense points isn't meant for people, it's meant for hardware. Might also be a pure armory but having more than one this high in a building this tall makes no sense. If your guys need guns you don't make them go all the fucking way up just to grab em and some ammo then go all the way back down. So to break in you parachute a small team onto the roof, break through the shitty door from the helipad up there, and duck straight into maintenance. Take elevator shaft eight down sixteen floors, break through into the HVAC system here and it's as simple as popping a vent grill. Bam. Servers."

"Unexpected direction."

"*Un*defended direction."

"Hard to reach."

"Straightforward path."

"Security?"

"Splice into lines leading out of the room and you have *everything*."

"Patrols?"

"No windows. No reason to walk into a steel coffin of a room so

far from any normal doors."

"How would you cut out of the shaft?"

"Hard way torch, fast way breaching charge though that shit would turn the elevator tube into a giant noise maker, best way would be the scissors. Just slice clean through obstacles like butter."

In the ensuing silence she noticed Satsuki walk over and fold her hands on the small of her back. Studying the wall then turning to face her. Sheepishly Ryuko met her gaze.

"D-Did I get carried away?"

Satsuki just smiled and clicked her heels together.

"Why no *commander*. It just takes a little *effort* to get you using your mind to your full capacity and this was a factor of upcoming days we couldn't figure out. One which you have solved *flawlessly*."

"E-Eh?"

"Do you understand enough of the building's layout that you could direct the completion of this map?"

"Yes? There are some sketchy points where different lines get all mixed up but the walls leaves space for things to run without cutting into things. It's like the earthquake proof stuff we got in this building except everywhere. Why?"

"He has been a *very naughty boy*, and stole something from us. I'm sorry I didn't tell you directly, and that only some aspects of this *wonderfully thought out plan* will be usable with some adjustments. Otherwise you have preformed as needed admirably."

"...This whole shit *isn't* just hypothetical?"

"No. This is what I needed your help with. We will be going to Osaka to claim your inheritance, reclaim corporate property, and send him a very clear message that *no one fucks with us*."

"...That's it? A *map*? You couldn't fucking tell me *this!?*... Satsuki."

"Yes-ss!"

Grabbing her cheeks Ryuko pulled at them before mushing the protesting face between her hands until both sides were red from being roughed up.

"What did I say about being a dumbass!"

Let go of she rubbed sore spots before being crushed into a hug.

"*Old habits Imouto, old habits...* And your penchant for refusing to consciously use your whole cerebral potential. With this now though we can put a plan together for how to proceed."

"What was wrong with the roof insertion?"

"It requires explosives, resources we don't have, and potentially murdering security."

"...Not really."

"Non lethal only dear. Minimizing risk. Shall we get to work?"

"I thought we were already working?"

"*You know what I mean.*"

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The day putting planning and training to work finally came on a humid June morning. After reaching central both Kiryuins boarded a chopper on the roof bound west south-west. From a distance one could already see that while the yen had made it's return to the rebuilt city of Osaka it was firmly still under *his* thumb. Flying over the outskirts glass and gold gleamed in the sunlight from the shipyards to the hills. The moment they crossed into the city's airspace the *battle* began. Following air traffic control instructions they were forced to land on an airstrip far from their destination. Their host wanted them to see his city from ground level. This had been foreseen and the multiple vehicles required for their enterprise were ready.

After landing they transferred to a company car brought in the night before by a pair of undercover security agents with distinctly green and blue hair tucked in their caps. Sitting in the front passenger seat Inumuta took his off after giving his suppressed tranquilizer pistol yet another once over. Checking his equipment one last time as the armored vehicle crawled block by block through traffic. Holstering it he turned around to confirm the itinerary.

"Lady Satsuki yesterday when you told us that this visit might turn a *tad* higher profile than we had previously discussed, we didn't anticipate slack jawed mobs desperate to get a look at or pictures of... *Do excuse me*, but what the hell substance did you put her *on!*?"

There was no possible way Takarada had known when he chose the date. This was the universe itself conspiring against them once again. It was the first Sunday of the month and they could not afford to deviate from schedule. Impossible for him to have known just what kind of frustrating wrench that had thrown into the works.

Leaning forward Ryuko pushed against the seat-belt between her black bound breasts. Gown freshly washed for the occasion. Her half lidded eyes radiating a slight blue light on ever-so-slightly-pink cheeks, hair underlined all over in red. Shiny black left hand reaching out to tuck a stray blue lock of hair behind his ear. Car coming to a rest at a red light Uzu turned and dropped his shades after seeing what he thought he saw in the rear-view mirror. Ryuko's voice unusually rich, and flowing forth past red painted lips.

"Wouldn't you just love to know oh little soldier man. Eyes hidden behind such delicate silicate prisms, study as you please, the answer will elude you with *exceptional eassse~*."

It was feeding day, and after a morning emergency *glass* Ryuko was *running half starved on full red*.

From behind her a finger looped down into her dress's collar section to drag the woman back into her seat. Quick glance over her face to inspect the state of her sanity briefly interrupted by an attempted kiss shoved back.

"No toying with our friends and no messing up the carefully applied facial adornment on thine lips. It would be difficult to do again in a moving vehicle."

"Vous n'êtes pas d'être amusant, grande sœur. Je ne plaisante pas avec les hommes. En particulier les chiens et les singes..."
You're not being fun, Nee-san. I do not mess around with men. Especially dogs and monkeys.

Satsuki released her to pluck a newspaper tucked in a storage pocket on the divider wall in front of them, rolled it up, and thwacked Ryuko solidly over the head. Slight shock blasting through pale unprotected scalp. Pouting in her seat a needy whine resonated in the confined space. Their driver tugging on his collar to get some air behind his protective vest with a grimace.

"Focus thyself."

"You're still not being very fun Nee-san~..."

"And you're being too *touchy*."

"Par for the courssse~. You're the one that wanted my all. It's a

hot fire Sats, burns through kindling rather quickly~."

"Houka how long until we're there?"

"F-Fifteen minutes or so."

Sighing she asked the front for some privacy. With a polite "Of course ma'am." both men concentrated on getting them all to the right place on time as she held down a button to raise the car's privacy screen. Pressing a second button electricity charged the three windows left around them into an opaque gray.

Drastic action would need to be taken to steady Ryuko, and while the multitude of ways this could go wrong echoed in her mind, she proceeded. Opening her briefcase she pulled out a small metal flask and handed it over. Curious individual turning it over before smelling a hint of some pretty strong smelling vodka inside.

"That is to mask your breath and clean your teeth."

"From?"

"There's only one way to calm you down and get you to your best Imouto. We both know what that is and it seems just a *shot* after breakfast wasn't enough to placate your insides."

Unbuckling seatbelt Satsuki moved into Ryuko's lap as she tilted her head in confusion.

"When facing the enemy only bring your best."

"Ssatss... What are you doing eyebrowss!?"

Silently she brushed her hair back behind right ear and leaned down. Following the retreating form as she tried to desperately push back into the seat and away from the calculated insanity. Eyes drawn to pale neck.

"You are a *sinfully* distracting delight that will no doubt garner the room's attention right now. *We need a bigger one* with enough liquid courage to sharpen her mind for the unknown amount of time negotiations will take."

"S-Satss that'ss what they invented alcohol for, we don't need to-thiss iss- thiss iss *nutss* even by our sstandardss."

"*Which is why I know it will work Imouto~.* Five seconds. Five seconds of drain to steady thy *hissing*, that's all."

"S-Satssuki. If I-... If I go into a sstrip club like *that*, my handss will not lissten to my bra-AAAI!!!"

She hadn't expected the hand that pushed the material of her dress aside on her chest to be there, or plunge well manicured nails right into her flesh with just enough force to make her cry out in pain. Reflexively comping down with enough bite force to snap titanium. Barely stopping the action from ripping clean through a jugular when she registered skin quickly pressed in between her teeth. Crushed by the soft cry of anguish that blew past her ears she was unable to stop *herself* when everything went red though.

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"Sooo... Dog."

"Something you're unsure about?"

"Remind me again what gear we're going to be using to get up that elevator shaft?"

"Modified cargo lifters meant for mountain climbers. They have been refitted to get up steel cable instead of bungee cord."

"And what's the backup for them?"

"What do you mean backup? We thoroughly tested them, all three units are perfectly fine. There a problem with them you didn't share before we put this whole show together?"

"I'm just saying man I don't like *not* having a backup plan for them."

"Since when did you care about plans?"

"Look I'm gonna level with you. Over thirty floors of free climb straight up then down lugging *anything* let alone yourself is really demanding. If those things don't work it's gonna hurt. Particularly for you and Snake."

"Then why didn't you say that back when we were deciding this!?"

"Because we were given a job! Are you going to tell not one, but *both* of them *naw* guys we *gotta rethink this cause it's gonna be hard?*"

"Yes! Everyone needs to be able to finish the mission no matter what! Fine, what are we going to do to keep on the time table if they don't work?"

"I don't know I was hoping you would have an idea."

"What are you gonna do Uzu!?"

"I said I don't know!"

"*Damn it Monkey.* Put those few remaining brain cells to work and fast. We're almost there."

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Long since dry down below even before leaving home Ryuko slumped back into a seated position lit up and quivering. Black glove rising up to clamp down on Satsuki's retreating wrist to drag it back over to a toothy grin after a hastily demanded *post feeding release*. Fiberous tongue licking digits clean while her internal heat subsided. Satsuki taking the time to get some water down and clear her head of the fog that comes with *donating*.

"Must you be so *filthy*?"

"My spit can shine the silverware Nee-san, it *works*~."

"We do have tissues available."

"Oh come on, *you like it too*~."

In a glowing daze she turned her face to the heavy glass window to her right. Watching the masses roll past, occasionally catching hundreds of individual words from thousands of conversations until pushing it out of consciousness.

"Better?"

"*Mmm...*"

"Shall we go over the files again?"

"...Do we have to?"

"You're the one leading this *action*. All you need to do is present the paperwork that he legally has to sign. If he asks though you need to be able to name specifics."

"Fuck that, I'll wing it."

"That's what I'm afraid of."

"*I already know them, don't worry.*"

Rolling her eyes Ryuko still moved a hand over to find Satsuki's on the seat as they sat in a comfortable silence for a few more minutes. Vehicle coming to a stop she could see gold and hear a

banging came from the front. Signal given Satsuki's briefcase was popped open again and eight green paper bundles wrapped in brown bands were dumped into her lap.

"Wha... That's a *lot* of large foreign bills for *bartender tipping*."

"Just stash them somewhere *in* your person that you could readily access. I know it's probably not needed but I've taken the liberty of having the bills sterilized just in case."

"What's the exchange rate again?"

"About one to one-hundred-fourteen. You're holding eighty-thousand US."

"*Why?*"

"Because even after a war the local saying is still *cash is king*."

"That's still a lot of *business-expenses-money* for a strip joint. You don't mean I'm going to be tipping the *service*?"

"Dear, your *business* here is to reclaim what's yours. Mostly... I fully recognize that we have to draw the staff's attention, but *do not* abuse this opportunity to go *wild*."

At that she received a deep menacing laugh.

"*Gods I'm leading a predator to a buffet...*"

"You're the one that *married* this *predator* under dubious conditions."

"I suppose it speaks volumes about my character if I said I'd do it again. Too late to back out from sending you in there now, no point putting off the inevitable. Let's go collect."

"*Oh there's going to be a collection by the end of today I can guarantee that much~.*"

"I will smack you again. *Move thy rear*."

"*Can I smack yours~?*"

"Will it get you moving!?"

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As their car pulled up to the curb under a great gold awning several muscle-mountain bouncers in suits stepped out the building's front door to stop foot traffic in both directions. A comparably tiny man in a pinstripe suit covered in furs and gold exited the glass double door next. Slicking his orange hair back he was ready for war with *The Conglomerate* to the east. He was ready to sink anchors in as many properties as he could. Use at least some of his new trump card if need be to hold onto the most lucrative one's.

He was not ready for who stepped out of that car.

After banging the divider three times per discussed if the need came up Houka stepped out of the vehicle. With military precision he walked around the car while sliding on a pair of white gloves and confirming the positions of hidden, possibly illegal, security cameras. Relieved to find all of Ryuko's predictions true. He tapped his ear comm twice.

The plan was go.

Opening the door he stood at attention as a pair of red heeled black boots slowly hit pavement. Fluidly standing up Ryuko's half lidded eyes locked in on Kaneo's for just a moment before she turned around and offered a hand to playfully tug Satsuki out of the vehicle. Disregarding the flash of camera's and general crowd she nodded to Houka before approaching *the ginger*. He gave her a wide eyed once over before begrudgingly tilting his head up a handful of damned degrees to meet her unblinking gaze.

He had started today with one goal in mind, outmaneuver a Kiryuin. It was almost a life goal of his ever since the several instant rejections the then already dangerously beautiful REVOCs heiress had handed down on the spot when they were barely teenagers. Long hair that smelled of lilac almost hitting his face when she turned on her heel to march away from him each and every time. His pride was always cracked by the one person he couldn't buy, but he always enjoyed watching her leave.

While the *Ice Queen* was present as she claimed she would *this one* was supposed to be a *street ruffian* turned *rich cousin cunt rocker* of some kind. A nobody new to the game of corporate maneuvering. Yeah Ryuko had apparently been some kinda hot shot something or other in her custom alien stripper combat gear, but she was supposed to be a little blushing buxom wallflower that only had insults to spare at every official meeting she got dragged into. Not adding productively, not *this*.

Hands on her hips she didn't budge when he put out his arm for a shake to welcome them to his headquarters. Swiftly moving to save face by flattening his hair again he half turned to motion them forward with a fake smile. Smirking back Ryuko strutted forward into the building's relative darkness. Muttered sarcastic

greetings and taunts shot back and forth between Satsuki and Takarada as they followed.

"*Still sporting the french peasant?*"

"*Utilitarian. Still wearing a suit made from prison clothes?*"

"*It's designer. Stylish.*"

"*I have a tailor I can recommend to you when you want to wear clothes not old bathing suits hacked up and put together with shoestrings and road kill.*"

"*You wouldn't know style even if it bit you on the ass Kiryuin.*"

"*If a designer counts, she already has.*"

"...."

Lights flashed toward multiple stages and raised platforms around the space. Their ears assaulted with a crescendo of bass thumps dropped by a DJ somewhere. Dozens of waitresses in rather small outfits moving around while *dancers* somehow wearing less vied for the attention of a heated audience. The highschool had been fine for a time, but Takarada wanted something more befitting a man who ran the region's largest syndicate after the war. So in the main floor of his black and gold tower was the city's most exclusive *gentleman's club*. And today they had been prepared to receive a pair of very *special guests*.

No expense had been spared. Starting with having some of the clubs most popular *entertainers* serving drinks on the floor for the first time, to a general breaking out of the finest alcohols money could buy being given in generous amounts. The air was full of energy and he was hemorrhaging thousands of dollars by the hour. But he stood to hold onto millions if he could keep certain profit streams. The *request* from one of his solidly built security personnel telling him he had an urgent visitor though had not been planned. Apologizing through grit teeth he knew who it was and directed his staff to make his personal *guests* as comfortable as possible before departing for his office in something faster than a comfortable walk. Ryuko heard the secret conversation held in Nee-san's earpiece confirming that the truck had made it without incident. Following a massive man they were directed up some stairs to a raised deck behind velvet ropes above the entrance floor. Area filled with private booths at eye level with the *entertainment* around the room taking up a majority of the buildings first few floors. Ryuko's unseen frown born of a nostalgic spike into her spine swallowed down to be replaced by a predatory grin splitting wider by the minute, she had a job to do and she knew just how to do it. Time to start getting *attention*.

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Behind the building at the exact second he needed to be there Gamagori was punctual as always, even when it meant having a fake breakdown. Puffing himself up as much as he could he kicked open the truck's cab door after flicking a switch to ignite a small device hidden in the engine that turned everything in front of his window into a foggy cloud of steam. Boiling water sizzling as he threw the bay open and let his fake anger rise when he pulled out the sacrificial phone chosen for the task. The street he was on immediately behind the building was small but had some foot traffic that needed to be removed, as planned running for their lives when the huge man erupted in a stream of profanities that could have made even Ryuko blush.

...Listen big guy, you need to scare the shit in their assholes so bad the suction of it retreating up their colons rips their pants in. Can you fucking do that? Oh come on that was weak shit, yell at me. I said yell at me!...

"WHAT DO YOU MEAN I CAN'T GET ANOTHER TRUCK OUT HERE! DISPATCH I HAVE A FULL LOAD YOU MOTHER FUCKING CUNT SUCKING BASTARD BEATING SACKS OF USELESS ASS BLASTED HOT STEAMING PILES OF SHITTT!!! I WILL NOT BE TAKING THE HIT FOR THIS BULLSHIT EXCUSE FOR A MAINTAINANCE JOB!!!!... WHAT DO YOU MEAN PAY FOR A TOW!? A TOW!?! I'VE GOT SIXTEEN FUCKING TONS OF STEEL AND DELIVERIES YOU HUMAN GARBAGE DISPOSAL FUCKWITS! EITHER SEND A CREW OR SEND ME A NEW TRUUUCK!!!"

On cue a pair of disguised guards strolled up to him when he hurled his phone hard enough onto the ground that it blew up on impact in a shower of exploding lithium. Unperturbed he shrieked a "WHAT DO YOU WANT COCKSUCKER!?" into Uzu's face with enough force to knock his cap off.

He'd be lying if he said that having the entire mass of Ira Gamagori screaming into his face wasn't just a little terrifying.

"W-What seems to be the problem sir?"

"YOU'RE BREATHING MY AIR THAT'S WHAT!"

"S-Sir I'm gonna need you to calm down just a bit..."

Security cameras panned over the scene, and inside the men operating them didn't give it a second thought. *Somebody else already dealing with it? Not my problem then!* As hoped. Meanwhile near the back of the truck a specially installed hatch was opened

from inside the trailer. Two large black bags dropped onto the street below it followed by Nonon rubbing her back and tucking her hair into another fake security cap. Pulling another heavy sack out she handed it to Houka and hefted the two around her up with shoulder straps. Fake conversation resolved around front the trio of disguised infiltrators found the right service door, Dog hacking the lock, and moved in while Gamagori looked busy with the truck.

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With confirmation that *phase one* was complete and *team two* was moving into *phase two* Satsuki let herself go slightly less rigid in her seat on a leather bench next to Ryuko. Even in the private booth with view the music bleeding through was awful, the crowd visible below to her left a floor down was a sea of lust driven undesirables, and the staff were trying their damndest to do their job *serving*. Which she couldn't blame them for, nor Ryuko's rather lackadaisical attitude toward... *getting just a bit too friendly*. They had been assigned some form of hostess. From her appearance alone she could tell the woman had been hand picked for the specific job of tending to them by virtue of sharing a very small number of her own physical features. Not enough to call him out on it unfortunately.

"How may we serve you?"

"By getting us to our scheduled meeting."

"...I'm afraid Mister Takarada is occupied at the moment. In the meanwhile we have been directed to show you the utmost in our available *hospitality* on the house in apology for the change in schedule."

"Neh, Sats, if he's footing the bill~..."

"No."

"Aww come on--"

"We're not here to *party with the disgusting animals*."

Refusing everything she crossed her arms and leaned back. Abstaining from anything other than frowning. She accepted the arm pushed behind her shoulders from Ryuko stretching out in the seat though, younger crossing knees and thinking over her options. And settling on an order.

"One glass of the *second* most expensive whiskey you offer."

"As you wish ma'am."

Interested in why the specification at least Satsuki turned her attention back into their booth. Hostess briefly leaving them.

"Second?"

"Need to get the ball rolling and you'd kill me if I said most."

"Why?"

"In a place like this there is one *specialty* that no other bar ever gets away with, and they charge an *absurd* amount for it. Check out the stage."

Swinging view back to the left Satsuki finally looked at the individuals on it closely.

"The, *calling it a show is being generous*, was stopped and replaced in the middle of a song?"

"Then they *do business* like every other seedy bar. Sit back and wait five minutes."

"For?"

"A *quick scrub*."

Otherwise uninterested in the various women swinging on poles she let her hands fall to the briefcase on her lap and slid down to slot her head back into Ryuko's shoulder. Waiting for *whatever was coming*. It wasn't long at least.

Their hostess returned wearing a white starched collar and black bow-tie. Matching white cuffs were on arms carrying a couple gold bottles and a crystal martini glass. Black leotard and hosiery shining as she made a show of turning to hold the door open for a short procession of women. Three were in gold two-piece bikinis and black stockings, the last was in a gold robe.

One of the bikini wearers sat on the bench seat and tried to start rubbing up against Ryuko, taking the hint to refrain from such when an evil eye shot across the woman in question to *don't even think about it*. Four others stepping out of their shoes and getting onto the table between benches. The robed one moved forward to sit on her knees near the table's edge as directed. Two of the bikini wearers in similar positions flanking her from slightly behind. The hostess kneeling behind the trio. Snapping her fingers their act began.

From both sides hands worked to remove the robe and let it drop to the table. Revealing the one in the middle had been up front on the main stage earlier. Hair still damp from a shower the brunette

locked eyes with her directed *client* with some surprise and bit her lip. Continuing the act she rubbed hands up from her waist to give a healthily filled bra a squeeze while the bikini duo and hostess moved bottles between each other to get ready.

A bra both sisters recognized. Which made Ryuko smirk, she knew what was coming next and it was a *golden* opportunity.

Arms held back by the aides the woman leaned forward to let ample breasts hang over Ryuko's knees. A very come hither expression aided by a goading from the woman on the bench with them for her to reach forward and open the front clasp. Maybe get a handful if she wanted.

She raised her hand to placate them but winked instead of getting up to follow their act. Instead she just reached up for her hair and pulled out a pair of spare sewing needles. Two multipurpose needles of the six she'd figured out how to hide along her skull for those moments where she just *needed* a spare. Making a show of spinning them around her fingers she properly grabbed then threw them forward.

In a life fiber weave there is always the first strand. The new original that all others added join with to form a whole, a sub colony belonging to the hive as a separate unit that can operate independently to a point. When using such knowledge to craft garments it provided an incredibly sturdy framework that gave items born of her hands an unmatched durability. And if you knew exactly where those structural lines were, which was nearly impossible to come up in regular use thanks to various mitigating support constructions, one could cause a *catastrophic failure* of the weave.

With perfect aim both silver points struck true. Missing flesh altogether one flew low and ricocheted off the table, the other high slipping past three bodies. Both embedding into the far bench while the calculated number of needed strings snapped after being pierced. Already rather skimpy Bra and g-string bands literally falling apart on the surprised stripper's form revealing her to them. Shaking themselves out of the stun the three bikini'd women just clapped. Main attraction breaking the order to speak after getting pulled back onto the table.

"For full frontal normally we charge extra *Anne Oakley*, but..."

She picked up the two scraps to shake her head in disbelief at frayed cotton where they snapped.

"Hot damn if that ain't some fine aim... Mistress Kiryuin... Do you teach?"

"...Trade secret. I'd have to kill ya if I told ya."

Satsuki actually smiled as small laughs rung out, they didn't know that *that wasn't a joke*.

"Worth a shot."

Getting back to business with the addition of a garment in each hand the brunette started rubbing her breasts. Working flesh until nipples were firmly pointed and pushed together. With cleavage ready the aids and hostess continued there own parts using the flesh as a fountain to gather the multiple cold amber drink components into the martini glass. With a final gold leaf garnish the three aides took bows and left, brunette taking her destroyed lingerie and wrapping it around the glass's stem and held it out to Ryuko. Not letting go when gloved fingers reached forward to take it.

"I don't do work for women mistress, *but...* if you ever need a good time with a third my numbers on the tag. Enjoy the drink~."

Reaching under a spot near her waist under the gown Ryuko pulled out a wad of cash and tossed it between the woman's legs. Raising the same hand up she rolled the gold band with her thumb.

"I already did. And we don't do *third wheels*."

"Ahh. Offer stands if you ever change your mind and the girls love your work, enjoy the rest of your day."

Putting her robe back on she left with the hostess. Alone again Satsuki was staring at her with an unreadable expression as she tipped the glass back to down it in one go.

"They already went through all the trouble to make it and I just tipped her a grand, not like I can just waste it."

"...Whiskey off of a whore's teats? People pay top dollar for *that*?"

"Well normally just the bra gets removed if anything at all. Liquid candy, with yer eye candy, off a broad probably named *Candy*."

Done with the drink she made sure no lipstick was left on it before pushing it onto the table. Still clutching the cloth in her hand she brought it to her nose and inhaled with a sigh.

"Not that they ever care. It's just a job."

"You've done this before?"

"Fuck no I had really good pocket money but not bank statements to

organize. Shit like this was way outside my budget. You're basically just legally paying for a private strip tease the drink is just an overpriced bonus. And this was not top dollar, actually stripping her was close but..."

"Then what is?"

"Drink and a blowjob, told ya you'd kill me. *I can look, but don't touch.* I might be fucked out of my mind on Fiber shit right now coloring every fucking little thought in my head... *But I remember a promise.*"

"...You--"

"Didn't touch her on purpose, yeah. Still dropped cash to get the staff knowing we mean business and if I want something they will bring it cause they know I'll pay. Un million de fois je dirais oui encore. En vertu d'un million d'étoiles, je dirais oui encore. D'un million de lunes, je nous embrasse. Un amour pour un million d'années au moins. Et je vais avoir la chance de le voir à travers sous une forme ou une autre."

A million times I'd say yes again. Under a million stars I would say yes again. A million moons, I embrace you. A love for a million years at least. And I'll have the chance to see it through in one form or another.

Tilting her head away from her raised hand full of underwear she didn't expect the kiss and tackle shoving her down to the bench with a muffled noise of surprise. Several minutes of tongue lashing and body rubbing later Satsuki sat up on her waist running fingers on her tingling lips and looking down at her.

"Quand avez-vous devenir si éloquent?"

When did you become so eloquent?"

"I went a long time sleeping under bridges and motel roofs. Giving away free knuckle sandwiches to the rabid masses. Putting the particularly stubborn... six feet under... I had no reason to build a *vocabulary*. Aside from gigs words were less than worthless, talking was nothing more than a distraction. A time waster to lose your nerve. And then I met your fancy ass, *Fiber knows* I had to pick up a dictionary in those first few awkward months after coming back from Rinne. But when exactly? *Lorsque nous m'avez donné une raison d'être.*"

When you gave me a reason to exist.

"...Thank you."

"Shit we should pay strippers more often if you're gonna do

this~."

"Don't push it."

"Relax, I'm kidding Brows. So how's boob whiskey? I know you just got a whole mouthful of tasting it."

"...It would not be worth thousands, but it's better than any beer you've shoved in front of me."

"Ha! I've talked to a bartender or two over the years I know the mix, can make it for ya at home if ya want. Can't really pour it down my own tits though... *wait no, fibers...* Not easily."

"I somehow don't think that adds much to the actual beverage dear. And I see you palming those panties."

Reaching down she plucked the bra from Ryuko's hand moving toward exposed skin on her thigh. Turning it in her grasp she studied it then looked down at the blushing woman.

"Why did thou try?"

"I need to make sure of how I wrecked them and figure out how to make it so I or anyone else can't do that again."

"Just work?"

"...I don't think you'd accept me tribbing ya through them and they were guaranteed just pulled out of clean packaging and only worn for the minute that whole thing took after she took a shower. *No smell.*"

"Well... Who says? Not quiet my size but it's close. If my loving loyal wife want's a little spice..."

Grasping it properly she pressed it over her suit and moved like she was checking herself in a mirror. After some torso twisting she folded it up, grabbed it's matching lower and shoved them down between Ryuko's breasts until she took them inside for safe keeping.

"Study them, fix them with improvements, and make the slight alterations needed. I'll keep them in the nightstand for... *friskier nights*. They do have a phone number on the tag, probably both, which you can add in black thread to distinguish them from the rest. I can only imagine what having at it in *authentic stripper's lingerie* would do for you my *panty pervert*."

A knock on the door signaled their moment of rest was over. Separating they fixed their clothes and found a box by the window with a button for the purpose of lighting a small LED on the lock, signal that staff could come in. Hostess from before entered and

informed them that Takarada would see them. Retrieved by security they reached an elevator away from the main sections of the floor and started the short ride up to an office overlooking the whole *club*. Reaching a gold door they were allowed inside by another pair of large men in bulletproof vests.

Surrounded by one way glass on three sides it was his way of watching the never ending party from above. Behind a massive wood desk a great leather chair was facing away from them. Owner overlooking the scene with an under-dressed escort of some description sitting on either arm-rest. At the snap of his fingers the pair of identical twins got up and left the room, door closing behind them he took one last sip from a champagne glass in his hand.

He had envisioned this meeting for some time. Sooner or later the rightful owner of the nudist's properties would come for them. And *she*, the newly minted Kiryuin, would be the opponent. And he would be damned if he wouldn't do everything in his power to show his superiority at the negotiating table against at least *someone* with the blasted name. He knew she took the bait for service. *She* was not an ice-queen. It was going to throw her off balance, make her nervous, throw some girls at the lesbian and she would be putty in his hands. He was in actuality not quite ready for her at all.

Turning around he expected to find the *Frigid-bitch* dragging the young blood by the ear. *Oh lordy did he look forward to that on it's own*. Instead he found one standing behind the pair of chairs in front of his desk idly staring at her watch. Turning further left he finally spotted her, and almost dropped his glass flute. He was not prepared to see her leaning way over to study the stages below them through the angled soundproof glass. Side profile showing off enough skin to make him choke on his wise greeting.

Hearing the squeak and *his* heart shooting up to cardiac arrest levels of *awake* she made a show of standing back up straight. Arching her back up in the process with a lungful of air for good measure. Satsuki, woman of her word, just quietly took a seat in one of the available chairs, and let her *work*. Steps muffled by black carpeting made their way around the three banks of glass. Her rear more or less at his eye level as she passed him by, large chair following her progress around the room. Eyes behind his glasses committing her flesh to memory, spike in blood-pressure every-time she *jiggled*. Satsuki was the first to actually speak, her signal to *get on with it*.

"Done admiring the decor? Your art is in cloth not furnishings if I recall."

"I'm just doing a little site-seeing, admiring the view, and studying the *locals* as they shake their hips. But yes we do have things to see, *people to do~ business with*."

Back in front of the desk she thought better of using Nee-san's lap, *for now*, instead she pulled the second chair back. After making her way around it she leaned her top half forward and *backed* rear into it in such a way to properly sit on the rear train of her dress. Shiny knee producing a slick noise as it exaggeratedly crossed over the other. When his eyes finally rose to her face he gulped at the toothy grin. He knew, that she knew, that he had just been dropped into the deep end of a pool. No matter how hard he tried, he would have nothing. So he did the only thing he could think of, *make an offer*.

"Twenty million. Twenty minutes."

"There isn't enough money in the world to buy my ass *ginger-snap*. You're also the lowest bidder on a finished auction."

Holding out her left hand to inspect her gloved fingers she made sure he saw the ring. Satsuki relaxing near instantly at the solid rejection. Takarada's glasses slid further down his nose. He was not about to be out-foxed, and more importantly outbid, in his own damn office. Tearing his eyes away from the *literally glowing woman* he gave Satsuki a hard stare.

"How much dosh did you plunk down to chain that broad to commitment Kiryuin!?"

She rubbed her temple while debating the merits of actually entertaining him. Eventually settling on some *shock and awe*.

"You were marginally aware of REVOCS net worth?"

"Everybody who was anybody 'ad eyes on the biggest book in 'istory. An all you 'ad ta do was give the ole bitch a proper shank to keep half of it. What of it?"

"*Two fifth's*."

He made a show gripping the front of his pinstripe suit as if having a heart attack. Truth be told he was actually close to one but they had nothing to worry about aside from the profuse sweating he broke into. Pulling out wads of Yen to fan himself back from a nervous breakdown.

"You had enough dosh to buy the *fucking country*, an you bloody spent it on a *dame*!? Are you daft!?"

"Love will make you do crazy things... *In her case it brings crazier things but... I'd do it again*. Can we get things moving?"

He swallowed nervously again when Satsuki handed Ryuko a small stack of forms. Stack pushed onto his desk he stared down at them then looked back up when Ryuko crossed her arms and rose an

eyebrow.

"Start signing it over, *boy*."

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"What do you mean it's the wrong size!?"

"Exactly what I'm telling you idiots, the cable is the wrong size. It's larger than regulation!"

Standing at the base of an elevator shaft in the dark of a first basement level the two men gave each other worried looks. Nonon was standing on the elevator in shaft eight brought all the way down and immobilized so they could use it's ropes to climb up to the thirty-fourth. Uzu's fear realized when she found the unexpected omission from the blueprints.

"Who the fuck even uses non standard elevator cables fucking shit..."

"Dog."

"I know Monkey, *I know*... Okay people we have at most forty minutes to figure something out, any ideas?"

Taking a seat on the edge of the elevator Nonon aimed her chest harness lamp down at them.

"How about we strap everything to Monkey and ride his shoulders all the way up?"

"I'm strong but I'm not King Kong. No. You can climb though."

"Yeah, for maybe one way at most. The bag with the cutting tools doubles my weight I can't get up there and back down with it. No way in hell. Dog's is full of computer shit that we need too. If it comes down to it we could leave yours here."

"And bring no weapons!?"

"We are weapons. Still leaves us needing to move two bags though. *Fuck*."

"We could load Monkey with the tools and trade the go-bag between trips. You'd take the up I take the down?"

"Can you even make it up without it?"

"I'm not that thin!"

"Dude I've been telling you to hit the gym for like five years."

"I was a master at corporate espionage before either of you were done with algebra!"

Before the argument could continue their ears buzzed. Satsuki wanted an update. Looking around none of the three wanted to be the bearer of bad news. Both men below calling out *"not it!"* they sat down and started going through their bags. Trying to think of anything they had on hand that could help. Sighing Nonon made the call, receiving Morse code back.

"Snag. Box is down but cables are too big. Still at bottom of field. Over."

"Damn it. Use box potential? Over."

"Negative. Would risk someone else using it while in or on it. Over."

"Hang on, transferring Fox."

Looking up in surprise she turned and saw her two compatriots were equally as lost. Uzu in particular turning to Houka.

"Who the hell is Fox?"

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In Takarada's office things were moving at a snails pace. He had signed over a number of things as the discussion went but both parties knew that those few he slipped to the side of the pile he was intent on keeping. Legally he was obligated to turn them all over, but he was fighting for them and he had an unspoken of bargaining chip over them. Ryuko was doing well to keep the pressure on him, and when deemed useful distract him. Making him repeat himself and loop around circular topics to frustrate him. He was also using his so called *golden tongue* to try the same, but Ryuko's general personality was almost allergic to *bullshitting*.

Twenty minutes in they were having a sufficiently heated verbal bout over a timing belt patent of some kind which gave Satsuki room to put her head in her hand and tap her earpiece.

The status update was not what she wanted to hear.

An unforeseen snag. Typical... Need a plan and quickly. Quick...

Stretching she used her shoe to tap the back of Ryuko's calf. Signal that she needed to step back and follow her lead for a little. Coughing into her hand she got both individuals attention. Ryuko spotting the earpiece held in in her fingers guessing what

she wanted her to do.

"I believe the two of you need a minute to collect before you start yelling."

"...Maybe. Oi ginger there a Ladies anywhere near here?"

Welcoming the pause to think of ways to throw her off himself he rubbed his eyes. Deciding to send the woman outside to the guards as soon as possible so he wouldn't have to keep looking at her. Not noticing her use a fiber to snatch up the communicator before leaving the room. Folding hands in her lap Satsuki was ready to temporarily take over.

"So shall we keep beating about the bush?"

"...What the hell Kiryuin, she's not a negotiator she's a firing squad!"

"You brought this on yourself, and you know it."

"I have something you want, you have something I want to keep. You get where this is going yeah?"

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Directed by the guards outside Takarada's office Ryuko was told of a women's staff restroom three floors down. Slipping in the earpiece she turned on the microphone.

"Somebody talk to me. What's the fuck up?"

"Red?... Fox... Duh..."

"Huh?"

"Shut up Monkey. Look Red were at the bottom of the shaft but the cables not standard gage. It's too wide and the clibers won't work. We're shifting weight but this still looks impossible. Over."

Shit, I could do the moving but time... "Lemme think."

By the time she was heading back to the elevators, *unfortunately on the wrong side of the building to be of use*, she punched a button and when it dinged came face to face with the brunette from earlier dressed about as much as the first time they were together. And a small plan began to form. Entering the box they shared a nod as it closed.

"Kiryuin?"

"Short pitstop. Where you heading?"

"Lockers, my shifts over. Unless you're game for some overtime~."

Leaning against the back wall side by side Ryuko looked up and hoped this worked.

"That depends, is there anything you *wouldn't* do for money?"

"Jobs a job. Normally that's shaking and slamming poles."

"Brass or Beef?"

"Whatever the day calls for, but now I have you making me think I should broaden that horizon a little."

"What if I told you I could pay you to do something unusual?"

"A *missus* tall, dark, and mysterious woman propositioning me to do odd things sounds interesting. Taking me up on that offer?"

"Fraid not, but..."

Reaching to her waist again she pulled out a solid roll of bills. Holding it up for the other woman to see.

"I never *danced* but I know what payday to payday is like, what if I told you it would get me all hot and bothered if you walked away from here and pressed some buttons for a nice five big for me?"

"...Is it clean?"

"It's not bloody if that helps. Just moving an elevator."

"*Shit*, and here none of us could figure what you two were doing in this little corner of the world. He *is* a bit of a creep... Real Jane bond shit?"

"You could say that it's an *odd job*."

She laughed quietly.

"Five thousand green just to push some buttons? How do I report that to my supervisor or tax lady?"

Ryuko unrolled the bills and folded them in half. Reaching over she carefully shoved the wad into one of her stocking tops.

"How about another *set* for the road?"

Looking down at the cash and then down at her chest she shrugged and shoved off the wall to hit the emergency stop button.

"Don't you make these?"

"Bit of spot check quality testing never hurts. *Sucker for thongs.*"

"*That so hmm?* You know the camera's are watching right?"

"Sound?"

"Wouldn't have said a word if there was."

"*Hmm*, guess you'll just have to sell it pretty good then. Five minutes for two items and no touching?"

"...So where do I send that elevator?"

"Number eight to floor thirty-four, back down to ground when the ghosts tap a song."

"Ghosts huh? *I can dig that~.*"

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"*Holy shit she's crazy-* hey boys toss the shit up and double time it we're hitching a ride!"

Working together the three of them rushed to get everything aboard the elevator. Staying quiet the machine was reconnected to power and they waited. Minutes later it started moving as *Fox* said it would. The three of them almost letting out sighs of relief.

In a minute they were in the right spot to begin *phase three* right on schedule. Working together on the platform they managed to get the vent cover off in record time. Sitting down Houka booted up his laptop and started power in the bank of attached hard drives and compute units all rigged to batteries in his bag. It would only last for ten minutes but that was twice what they needed. With Uzu's help Nonon muscled into the vent with a connection device in hand and started crawling forward. Monkey setting to work with a pair of wire cutters helping Dog take over the buildings security.

Almost a dozen meters in she pulled on a pair of welding goggles and pulled out a pocket torch. Again it would only last maybe two minutes but that was all she needed to cut a path through the side wall of the vent she was in, and the one running parallel to it. Hot air blowing into her face she moved over and kept crawling as fast as she could. Floor and ceiling around dense enough to muffle the sound of her movements from anyone above or below. At the end of the tunnel was a second grate and a loud drone of fans. Punching through the grate she waved to the camera to the right of the actual door and got a confirmation from her headset that Houka

could see her. From there all she had to do was plug in the device, wait a minute for Dog to crack his way through the heart of the Syndicate, and *sell* the desired shares through ten prepared shell corporations where it finally landed in the account Satsuki wanted it in. Objective complete he told Nonon to wait a few more seconds. After pulling copies of just about anything he could fill his spare drives with and installing a tiny backdoor deep in the data they initiated *phase five*.

As Ryuko had termed it, *phase Get the fuck out!*

Up-link in hand Nonon pulled the vent back into place, crawled all the way back through the ducts, and landed on her feet. Hastily repacking their bags she started tapping out a song on the elevator hatch. More smiles breaking out when they heard a muffled laugh inside and started moving down.

They were in the home stretch now.

Mission's primary objective complete Nonon tapped out a confirmation over the whole com net. Gamagori finished his fake repair and while her heels echoed down the hallway she was walking in Ryuko's predatory smile returned. Approaching the pair of guards at Takarada's door she cracked her neck.

Time to sweep up.

Door closing behind her Satsuki looked for any sign of a hand off of the earpiece from the woman. She rose an eyebrow when Ryuko just walked up to the desk, spread her hands and bent over to look down at Takarada.

"So where were we, *ahh right*, you were going to sign over the rest."

Bending a little further her necklace dangled like an executioners ax while she picked up the stack of paper set off to one side and dropped it back on the pile. Answering his questioning look with a toothy grin.

"Now listen here, we were talking about some fair treatment in exchange of my careful keeping of these--"

"No, you've been repaid for financing the nudists and rebuilding the city. *Party's over~.*"

"Oh really? What if I told you that it would be a mistake to throw away the negotiations?"

She leaned further over the desk while starting to release some power to unnerve him. Widening her eyes she stopped blinking and stared at him with an increasing pressure until he started sinking down in his chair.

"What if I told you that you were out of options and ammunition~?"

"...What are you on about?"

"Oh, *nothing*. Well... Now you have *nothing*~."

The dawning realization on his face got Satsuki to lean over for a better view. Patting around his body he frantically got his phone out and started swiping around. Choking with horror growing after finding a certain item line missing from his accounts he looked up to find Satsuki leaning over the back of his chair and Ryuko holding his ivory and gold pen out toward his chest.

Letting out a rush of air from his nose he had no idea how, but *his king was in check*. Reaching down they watched him pull open a drawer. Pulling out a shot glass and a crystal decanter. Carefully pouring himself a drink he downed it and slammed the glass back onto the table.

"I pay out the ass for the best security money can buy. Kiryuin I don't care what the media says, or what pit of succubi you pulled her from, but even without yer jackboots *you're fucking scary you know that?*"

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Briefcase loaded with paperwork Takarada was dragging his feet behind the procession to the front door. Pride bruised and mangled he consoled himself with a view of the untouchable walking in front of him. Team two done with their own half of the mission Nonon took all three bags back up into the truck trailer with her and off Gamagori drove. Two remaining infiltrators going back to the car to pick it up and head around front of the building for pickup. They were confused when they saw people running from the building in fear.

She heard the noise before anything else. The solid metal click of a firing assembly releasing an almost uselessly small dagger into the end of a brass container was small but overpowered the music and noise of the floor. Turning her head in the far end of the room she could see clear down the grooves of a barrel that quickly obscured with a cloud of black and lead. Projectile already in the air as she turned to figure out where it was intended to go. Obviously it was going to miss her completely. Why would someone so intent on shooting aim so far away toward-

Nee-san.

NEE-SAN!!

The rules of engagement went out the window, fallout of that *be damned*, bullets were flying and she *needed* to stop them. Pushing a hand past the speed of sound she was thrumming with every ounce of power she could will from her body. Movements fighting against air resistance that felt like shoving her limbs through solid stone she just barely managed to graze the first with the very tip of her middle finger. Watching the burning warmth in it's wake ever so slightly redirected upward off the curve of her skin. She honestly didn't care where it was going after that, anywhere other than the slow motion face filling with surprise having her bangs moved by the air distortion. Ryuko heard the next shot and went back to work. One by one shoving hands faster and faster to redirect or catch assassins rounds before they could strike home squarely into Satsuki's chest. Unfortunately she was running on limited reserves as it was.

This was exhausting.

Dozens of lead slugs flew off impacting some gilded decorations on the wall far behind and above them. Dozens more dropped to the floor to burn black dots into the red carpeting where they angrily sat denied their purpose. And on she went until the burning sideways rain ceased sounding off. Mentally counting she knew more or less what they had been firing, what likely magazines they had been using based on the size of the bullets, and turned to finally face the group of heavily tattooed gunmen tearing off their shirts while the masses ran in terror.

She was so sure of this that she missed the last round fired.

Her muscles were burning from the exertion. Opening her eyes after a blink she was trapped. A lone slug was just millimeters from her eyes and gaining ground by the nano-second. Her arms were spent but she could in theory just shift her head to let it graze past a cheek.

But Satsuki was right behind her. If she moved it could hit her directly, or glance off and then hit her. She naturally only had one choice as it streaked ever closer toward her face.

She had to catch it.

Gritting her teeth she put whatever force left in her to bracing her left leg slightly back and grit her teeth. Letting the sizable forty-five ACP smash through her eye in a shower of red mist. The spray of blood after impacting the tissues lining the back of the socket splattering behind as her skull reflexively turned in pain from the impact. Drops of life dusting Satsuki in a spray of red.

Ryuko didn't hear the panic rise from the crowds fleeing. She

didn't hear whatever self righteous nonsense was directed at her by the group of thugs claiming they had been wronged by Takarada and his church of greed. She felt cold. She couldn't see out of her left eye.

But she heard Nee-san gasp. Still breathing. Heart still beating.

She couldn't fall yet, not until Satsuki was safe.

"...*You in one piece Sats?*"

"R-Ryuko! You're--"

"Find cover."

"But--"

"*Get into cover, Satsuki.*"

While Takarada's bouncers scrambled to drag Satsuki and their boss back toward the elevators front security started preparing to return fire upon the group responsible. Woman fiercely trying to beat her way out of the hands pulling her back by the arm. One tried to grab Ryuko as well but she shrugged him off with a force that shocked the heavy man.

"RYUKO!"

"Get her to safety."

"Ma'am you--"

"Have a score to settle. Oi!"

The gunmen had taken the spray of red to signal success at their bullet spray, she'd moved faster than anyone could have seen. But as liquid and gore ran down her face she was still a little worried. She wasn't healing. And the metal shard embedded in the mess was kinda *fucking hot*. Anger in her eye and ignoring the static of frantic calls asking for what was going on in the earpiece Ryuko started running forward. Snatching up a pair of beer bottles abandoned on a table she ran straight for the group of ten men reloading and let loose.

Even without the aid of fibers Ryuko Matoi was a seasoned brawler.

"We're not here for you bitch--"

He was silenced by a bottle crashing through his jaw. Teeth, glass dust, and blood flying as he got shoved backward and into another man. A third tried to bring his gun up on her, she grabbed the barrel and yanked it along with the upper half of the firing

assembly clean off. Tossing it aside while the men left standing hurried their reloading and pulled out knives.

Security couldn't open fire on them with a VIP in the middle of the fray, all anyone could do was watch as Ryuko one by one *dismantled* the group in a flurry of spins, kicks, and rolls.

Within minutes the last man fell into the pile of blood and bodies. Battle over Ryuko stood victorious over the dying broken forms at her feet. Skin and dress covered in blood and viscera. Finally breaking free of security Satsuki ran to her. Turning in place she smiled at the approaching woman. Accepting the crushing hug that barreled into her and tried to tightly grab any bit of her still intact.

"Damn it Ryuko what were you thinking!?"

"That you're not bullet proof."

Finally getting a proper look at Ryuko's face she couldn't stop the tears coming. Hand gently trying to wipe blood running down a cheek.

"And you're just bullet resistant!"

The red was bleeding out of her hair, there was no glow of fibers in her eye, and her skin was losing it's color as well. This was far beyond a simple drop into unconsciousness.

"R-Ryuko you're not--"

"It's that bad huh?"

"We need to get you to a hospital! *NOW!*"

"I don't think there are doctors that can fix this god damn mess eyebrow-... *w-wait...*"

"You-... D-Did you just-..."

She couldn't stop it. She started quietly laughing. Legs buckling Satsuki quickly moved to hold her up as her voice got weaker with each shudder.

"Holy shit I must be in a real bad way... if the fucking bastards have let go... completely... Oh fuck..."

"You were *shot* you idiot stop moving and hold on I have to get you to the car!"

"That's... gonna fuck up... the leather..."

"If you keep squirming I can't move you."

"Can't... *help it... God I'm a wreck...*"

"Ryuko hang on we're going to get you help... Ryuko? Ryuko stay with me!"

She was starting to shake from shock. Body going cold and fully limp. With no time to lose Satsuki stopped, swept her up properly to carry, and started rushing for the front door. Their *operatives* running to clear the path straight to the heavy metal car parked on the street from out front. Piling in Uzu helped get the now unconscious woman into the backseat uncaring for the storm of news copters and police gathering. Houka running to grab a cop and get officers moving. Now sitting in the driver seat he floored the accelerator. Police escort racing them toward the first available hospital.

Sitting in the back Satsuki couldn't do anything more than stroke the head on her lap.

*Nothing ever goes smoothly. Life for a Kiryuin is never fair
Imouto... Why us... Why you...*

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She could feel wind. Struggling she tried to open her eyes while the ringing in her ears resolved into a constant slow beeping. Everything was black. Sore all over she managed to sit up and start feeling around. Finding the cloth wrapped around her head she tried to pry it off, and failed to figure out how. She stopped when she heard a rustle of fabric. A pair of hands quickly moving over her head to undo the material on it. Fabric removed she immediately regretted losing it. Hissing in pain at the bright light bouncing off the white walls, ceiling, and furniture that made her close them again. Shielding them with her hand she tried again managing to keep them open a crack to let her pupils shrink. She was in a hospital bed, at least she thought that, she'd never actually been in a hospital before and her knowledge came from generic pictures and descriptions of such. Investigating herself she found her gloves and boots gone, some cheap cotton slip on top of gown. Vision focusing she let her hand drop and looked around

properly. Ignoring the wires running to a number of pads stuck to her from the right she saw a literal pile of broken IV needles in a box next to the bed. Various empty plastic bags were in another one though. Turning her attention over to the left she found Satsuki standing next to the bed. Eyes ringed with bags and stress. Before she could ask about anything the woman dropped onto the bed and hugged her. Crying onto her shoulder.

"My goddess rose on the third day..."

"...Wha?"

Standing back up Satsuki pulled a chair over and sat down as close to the bed as she could. Handing over a cup of water to her with a relieved smile.

"You were out cold for over two days Imouto. You must have burned everything there was to burn in your furnace."

"...It's been three days!?"

"Just about. How are you feeling?"

"Like shit."

"Mmm, You would after that. It took Tsumugu and Aikuro four and a half hours of wrestling your muscles with steel rods to dig the bullet out from the socket after we got you to a hospital. Just trying to keep you from feeling it took an absurd amount of sedatives mixed into blood pumped through you. How's your vision?"

"Everything is too fucking bright. It'll work itself out. How bout you?"

"Me?"

"Yeah."

"Sleep deprived, worried sick, and haven't eaten or slept well since Sunday. Otherwise intact if you don't count my frayed nerves."

"Did we win?"

"Win? Oh, even with the damage done to you everything else succeeded. We got the shares, you properly own all of Father's old assets, and now that your up I can finally rest easy... so yes. Road bumps aside, we won. Thanks to you..."

"Worth it."

Putting head down into her hands Satsuki sighed, but laughed. Looking back up she got up and got into the bed. Ryuko shifting

over to make some space held onto the woman for dear life.

"Could you please stop going through *near death experiences*?"

"Tell that to the assholes who keep trying to put us in them. So long as you're in danger I won't stop Nee-san... *Come gunmen, swords, or alien invasion*... No where else I'd rather be."

"Undying, unrelenting, Goddess Red did thus vow to live and fight onward more with renewed conviction. Stubborn and resilient she must be~."

Filling her cheeks to pout at the teasing Satsuki laughed again and poked her face to deflate them. Leaning in to kiss her in apology. Backing off she saw confusion in Ryuko's eyes. Looking hard at her after licking her lips again.

"I needed to feed you to get you back up. There are only so many times I can sneak an IV line into your mouth and claim you rejected the needle. Had to bring it in bottles, and it would be suspicious to bring drinks and not..."

"...You fucking drank *the wine* to make whoever is around think it was nothing?"

"Just sips. *I'm sorry, but that concoction tastes god awful Imouto...*"

"More for me then huh?"

"Grin and bear it dear. Might take a couple months to see where your new sustain level is but we'll get you down to a minimum eventually."

Content to hold each other they laid like that listening to the steady beeps in the background and salty wind from the room's open window. Eventually raising her head some questions were nagging the back of Ryuko's mind.

"Why am I still in my dress if this is a... where are we exactly? *I feel tubes in places there shouldn't be tubes...*"

"Because it's fused to your skin in places. We *couldn't* remove it from you. After extracting the round police came and took it and blood swabs as evidence before releasing you fully to medical care. Your private *doctor* handling your care got you transferred back to Tokyo by air. *Closer to home and family.*"

"Have you even gone home?"

"Only to bathe and gather little things needed."

"What happened to work then!?"

"I took time off. The opening has been pushed back to July as well to give you *time to recover*."

"But I'm good?"

"Ryuko you were shot in the face, you're going to be officially laid up for *two weeks* at least."

"*Seriously!?*"

"I can have you moved to the house, *I can overwhelmingly demonstrate the ability to pay for home medical care*, but you're going to have to stay indoors and under the radar for at least nine more days. But don't worry, I'm sure we can come up with *something* to pass the time."

"Can't we just bullshit and say it was only a flesh-wound?"

Rolling over on the bed Satsuki reached over to a side table and picked up a newspaper. Bringing it over she put it on Ryuko's lap.

"Normally yes. After *this*, not a chance."

Flipping it over to read she squinted until her eyes started focusing properly. Drawn immediately to the massive center picture of Satsuki covered in blood splatter surrounded by a sea of emergency services parting around carrying her body marred with blood and char from close range gunshots grazing her. Half of her face just a dark bloody mess. Scanning around to read the headline.

"...Fashion designer Ryuko Kiryuin stops mass shooting, A new Kiryuin Corporation for a new age... *saves... Three-hundred and eighty single-handedly!?*"

"Takarada's security couldn't do anything with you in the fray, but it turned out they didn't need to. And that has been plastered all over every major paper from Kamchatka to Chicago. Congratulations Imouto, you've made *national hero* status."

"Okay... news is one thing, *but hero!?*"

Silently Satsuki pulled out her phone. Flipping it around to show her the screen she could only make out a wall of red tones.

"Eh?"

Turning it back around she un-zoomed the picture and showed it to her again. It was Central, specifically the front of the building. Lined up from end to end was a solid wall of flowers. A meter high.

"Security had to clear the doors two hours after the news broke of what you did. A dozen news choppers had been overhead capturing views of us loading you into the car injured. When your *fans* heard about what happened they started leaving rose bouquets and cards wishing your survival and a speedy recovery."

"But... I don't-... I just make clothes. *Fancy bras...*"

"Imouto I've been telling you for months, the general public is *fascinated* by you. People love your work and adore *you*. Your talent. Your creations. Now do you finally believe me?"

Shakily she dropped the paper and took the phone from Satsuki's hands. Carefully looking over the scene. Surprised to find herself tearing up at the apparent generosity and well wishes of hundreds if not thousands.

"I-... *F-Fiber am I fucking crying!?*"

"You have the recognition from the people that you deserve. For all you've done even if they don't know it and continue to do."

"...*People actually care? About ME!?*"

Reaching over she took the phone and with her thumb wiped a tear off blushing cheek. Blue eyes whole again staring up at her.

"You know I do with all my heart. And our friends do. Your coworkers have been holding a silent vigil holding candles. On and on... *From thine fingers and thread thou has found thine calling, and the people rejoiced all over the world. Clamoring for more miracles on earth bestowed by thee.*"

"...W-We're gonna have to increase production before the doors open aren't we?"

"*Fufufu~. Big time dear, big time~.*"

Chapter End Notes

Apologies for the silence, went full on to get this sorted.

This was two chapters but the first one was rather short and took place all in the one meeting room, and it's been a while, and it's a holiday weekend, sooo... another editing nightmare. And a ton of words.

And being on chapter 11 was funny. Which is why it ends near the ocean... shut-up.

I really need to stop doing 30+ page chapters.

News wise with the consolidation there might be only one chapter left.

Knights probably getting the update next, until then I thank you for reading.

Transplants to the quiet life

Chapter Summary

“You can't be serious.”

“It's not that bad. Please put it on.”

“That looks horrible, and like its straps are going to fall apart any minute.”

“You need to wear one, and this is what we've got from the first aid assortments.”

“I'll make one myself before wearing that *thing*.”

“Do you even know how?”

“Its an eye-socket thong. Actually couldn't I just borrow-”

“NO!”

“If it's something solid with no trim no one would know its really-”

“*Absolutely not!*”

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Wiping the sweat from her brow Satsuki leaned back to admire her handiwork. Kneeling before the privacy wall under the shade of leaves she was finally done pruning excess greenery along the inner perimeter of the property. All five hundred and three little lives in the making originally given a secure home at the optimal depth, rested in optimal soil, and nestled in with individual *welcome home care packages*. Each one formulated to ensure every bush had the material building blocks required to grow into big and strong vines.

“Next year you should bloom my little ones, please give it your best!”

Clapping debris from her work gloves she got up to stretch, and in the distance distinctly heard a frustrated swearing.

The missus was evidently in distress, and that was not something

to be ignored so long as she could help it. Especially when she had a rather large decision concerning the woman to inform her of. It was important that it be done at just the right time.

And she had so far been plagued with an annoying bout of cold feet.

Sighing she picked up her tool box and returned it to a shed far in the back of the property. Dirt covered gloves deposited she walked back around the house to reach the front end of the yard, and the garage. Poking head through an open door she let herself in, and quickly spotted a pleasant posterior bouncing as its owner worked.

"If your self appointed *private nurse* knew what you've been doing every day she would be throwing a fit right about now."

"I'm fine to start with, and both of you already know it. All she said was get plenty of rest and no heavy lifting. Heavy is relative. Besides, I'm mostly reading. You said that was fine."

"An installation manual however technical it may be hardly counts as stimulating literature."

"It's still reading, *however poorly I can do that right now with this stupid thing...* I need the wrench to your left."

"I'm afraid you'll need to be more specific than that."

From form bent at the waist over a fender a hand covered in black oily mess came up to point out the general direction for Satsuki to search. Taking an educated guess at a trajectory she pulled a steel implement off a wall hook, and hand delivered it to extended waiting fingers. Guess correct it disappeared, along with the arm that took it, down behind steel walls draped in paint protecting mats. Standing on her toes she craned her neck to follow its progress deep down into the depths of the dark engine bay before them, where it missed the target nut by a small degree sending the small metal ring to the floor in a series of clangs.

Low growls rumbled out of the woman's throat in its wake. Braced on the car she shoved her face down further into the bay. Swears mumbled as she tried to claw the infernal, *proper*, black eye-patch off her face. Before it could be so much as moved Satsuki was quick to stop the motion with a stilling tap of fingers on bare shoulder.

Wrench dropped onto the concrete garage floor with another clatter Ryuko slumped in frustration, her forehead landing on the engine itself. Some weeks back some hoses had erupted spectacularly into steam in the middle of rush hour traffic. Even after blowing up a radiator she was determined to get it running without sending the car to someone else though. So with a large chunk of time stuck at

home she'd spent the vast majority of the last few days meticulously dismantling, then rebuilding, the whole engine bay from the transmission up. It had so far been a very frustrating few days spent using good old fashioned wrenches, winches, and screwdrivers instead of the many red strings used the first time to assemble everything inside two hours. *This time it was being done by the book.*

Tracing lines down shoulder to upper arm Satsuki frowned feeling the angry fringes of emotion beneath. "Thou art excessively upset with something unworthy of thine unusually impressive rage--"

The response chasing her careful words was almost biting.

"*I'm not angry.*"

The denial was thin and betrayed by its own delivery. She was allowed to retrieve a worn book from where it sat nearby unopposed though. Store of information instructing one how to do the work deposited on a clean workbench, *where it would be undoubtedly called upon again soon enough*, she went back over to diffuse things. Pushing a foot between white sneakers planted on the floor she nudged them about a meter apart to start. Dark pleats folded up to prevent mess transfer she ran hands up firm flesh and slipped them under delicate fabric to fix some bunching up. Fingers hooking each side from within they ran up the curves one last time before letting the immaculate silk snap into place.

How Ryuko managed to keep them clean while doing all manner of work was one of a few secrets known only to herself. They were always little frivolous things, *Trade secrets* she called them, but she somehow always managed to find a way out of answering about them. Ruminating on those would have to be left for another time, the deliberately slow motions had gotten zero response.

Raising a brow she surmised that this foul mood must be deep, so she tried a different approach.

Stepping right in between spread feet she braced her pelvis against the exposed butt. Leaning forward she started at exposed skin at the top of the skirt, and worked knuckles up the spine to half exposed shoulders flanking a red Y strap. Years of hand to hand combat training had made her intimately aware of the various muscle groups in the body. Once she worked out hand angles this knowledge translated amusingly well into giving massages. Much like her acquired penchant of talking to plants to encourage their cooperation though, only one soul actually knew about this.

It was never asked for, never offered outright, but when she felt like doing it Ryuko always melted into receiving. Working iron skin it eventually yielded to her rough fingers. Reduced to its unnatural softness was a sign that the woman was relaxing, but the angry sparks beneath smooth rubs did not subside by much.

"So you may say dear, but that's not how you *feel*."

Still unresponsive she stopped and picked Ryuko up off the car by her midsection like a deflated doll. Standing her upright away from the vehicle she circled around to talk face to pouting dirty face.

"If I may take a guess, is it physically irritating you?"

The lone visible eye still avoided her, so Satsuki leaned and ducked to force herself into view until finally she got an answer after a grumble.

"No... The patch is nothing and the temporary eyelid stitching is all fiber, I could will it away at any time."

"Then where is thine agitation sourced?"

"Two eyes are kinda important for doing *anything*."

"Lack of depth perception?"

"*That*."

"I'm sorry, but you are the one that *insisted* on working in here while in such a state."

"I got time and could be flying through assembly, but *nooo... let's half blind me for no good reason*."

"There is a very good reason. You are still days off from being statistically able to use your eye in the best possible scenario. It would be--"

"Extremely suspicious to be spotted whole and intact so soon after getting *fucking shot in the face*. I get that, alright? I know it isn't *normal*... But who's gonna see us in here!? Private property. Isn't that what the wall an shit was for in the first place?"

"Aside from the obvious possibility of unforeseen situations arising, it's to keep you honest. If ever asked about such an item, and general details of your *recovery*, you can give whomever is *annoying* you an actual answer off the cuff. It also has to look like it's been *lived in*, yes? Now, before you do something regrettable in thine foul mood go and clean up. I will return the implements of construction strewn about to their places."

Ryuko looked back at the car before shuffling over to a wide metal wash basin with slow heavy movements. It was the one corner Satsuki specified *had* to be in the smaller building on the property. *No motor, mechanical, or otherwise excessively messy fluids in the house whenever possible*. The smell of industrial

soap's abrasive lather was already strong to the average nose though, the overpowering orange explosion made to cut grease wouldn't make her mood any better. Tools returned to their *homes* the two women were soon side by side at the basin.

"Don't despair so heavily my dear, we are going to be stepping out for a little stroll. I wanted to get fresh greens and can't officially leave you alone in your present state, so you're coming with me. A break from the frustration will do you good."

Ryuko returned to non-responsiveness until a hip playfully bumped into her. Prompted to move she finally took to acting more like her usual self by bumping back. *Second volley* sent her way dodged successfully she turned in place and rolled her hips back to bounce Satsuki toward a towel rack in a stumble.

Shaking her head she smiled, and flicked wet wrists to throw water back. Trace droplets employed as tiny missiles were blocked by crossed arms, but it was over a rather obvious fake frown attempting to desperately hold back a genuine smirk. *Mission accomplished* she took a towel and dried her hands before tossing it over to Ryuko.

Contact had been made so she inspected her clothes, thus far kept clean with some effort, to make sure there hadn't been any residue transfer after impacting the *amateur mechanic*. Her mouth pursed to the side at the sight of a lone black splotch now on her denim clad hip. Across the basin a matching fresh splash of black was mixed in with dried stains on the back of one *general chores skirt*. When Satsuki clicked her tongue at it Ryuko contorted to inspect her pleats.

"Well, now your pants look *lived in* as well. I'm not changing."

"Did I say anything?"

"You *wanted* to say something."

"I had nothing of the sort in line to be vocalized I assure you."

"*Vocalized.*"

"If you *insist* on saying I should say something, I might be inclined to say something. But I will say to you now, know I would rather *not* be saying something as I do not presently wish to say anything of the sort you think I would say."

She knew exactly what was coming, and caught the wet towel hurled back toward her face with enough force to blow her hair about in the wind that carried forward.

"You *could* stand to wear a shirt at least once this week. Most anything clean in general would be an improvement right now."

"This is *technically* a shirt."

"*That* my dear sweet Imouto, is a well engineered brassier not a blouse by any stretch of the imagination. One made for strapping thy self down in vigorous activity, or *comfortably snuggling against I will admit*, but still just a *barely socially acceptable to wear in public bra* nonetheless."

"Outer tops are outer tops. I don't make the rules I don't follow."

Towel in hand she moved back in front of Ryuko and nudged her chin to the side to wipe away the last errant smudges of grease. Rag now in need of a wash itself she tossed it aside to be dealt with later.

"If I do recall, a certain someone has a certain clause written into a certain labor contract. This clause specifically specifying a certain exemption from a certain corporate code of conduct. This certain clause necessitated the creation of an entire separate professional dress code guideline, *another certain someone present to this discussion had to figure out how write up in full legalese*, and submitted to human resources to have on file. Therefore while indirect you do, *in fact*, make *the rules* that you follow no matter how much of a headache it brings."

While Ryuko frowned trying to remember that night she idly fingered a black zipper between fields of burgeoning red. Answer to the statement formed as fingers clutched the metal rectangle and gently tugged it down a slight amount mindlessly.

"Hold up. You actually had that put into *writing*?"

"*But of course my dear*. We entered labor negotiations, your demands were laid out... *succinctly*, and I agreed upon them in full. All terms were then put into writing as part of your appointment. One, *if you may permit me to say*, you have done *tremendously* well in aside from a few rough bumps that get sorted out as they come."

Ryuko had shaped up to be exactly what she had predicted possible, and then some. While sales figures pegged her department solidly in second place now, it was universally agreed across management that she was drawing the public to the brand as a whole. The praise was genuine and frankly overdue, and it brought out a dusting of a red blush from her. And a scattering of her thoughts, which was evident enough when her hand jerked the zipper a full inch down involuntarily.

Brushing Ryuko's hand off she took careful hold of the black metal with one hand, ran fingers up from skin to cup around material with the other, and tugged the black strip three-quarters open to

release at least *some* of the compression on *purpose*. And like every time she made Ryuko realize what she had been doing subconsciously, that blush grew from ear to ear.

"Conveniently rather *minimalist* tops, wouldn't you agree my *naughty little sister*~?"

"C-Convenient enough for a bunch of things... My clothes are my business."

"Clothes are literally *the* business, so I would hope as much."

"You know what I mean..."

"Fufufu~. It's summer, *well worn* lighter things are to be expected. Especially on an individual who normally wears rather minimal garb as it is *year round*. All things considered I suppose it's somewhat believable for *you* to be spending such time like this. Rehabilitation used to dance oil stained pleats around motor mounts instead of on some medicinal retreat in the mountains."

"Don't think any places would let anyone dump *laundry shit* into their hot springs."

"I'm sure for enough money one could be granted *anything*. If you so wished to *actually go*, I could attempt to find a place willing to indulge an eccentric individual--"

"The big ass tub is fine. Anything more and we'd be swimming around a pool while a... *uh, rub and scrub goes on*."

"Mmm~."

She wrapped her arms up around Ryuko's neck to pull her in. Faces lit by a soft red glow of *heated onsen ideas* flashing to life from the topic, *and maybe odd memories from the last few days sharing such a comfortable position*. It didn't take long for a pair of lips to capitalize on being taken into *effective range* of her own.

Thoughts and comforting feelings beyond her own content musings came flowing through in seconds, waves going deep as an invigorating warmth unfurled from within. She could never name the Fiber induced sensation specifically, but it was wholeheartedly welcomed inside anytime she was graced by its concentrated release.

In the midst of receiving this *internal visitation* fingers started to roam around her back. Inching upward from flanks up to shoulder blades Ryuko pushed forward into the oral *clash*. Force was naturally met with force. Satsuki pushed her backward against the wash basin until her rear made it over the rim, and leaned in while a leg slowly swung up around her hip in retaliation. With pressure on her butt another pressed upon her thigh. One which

trembled after a shudder that grew into a slow rocking motion grinding cyan stripped material into her leg. Bracing her hands against the wall she pulled back from the kiss while the other woman sank into the basin, dragging teeth across Ryuko's lower lip along the way.

Staring down at flushed skin while panting for air she smiled at Ryuko sitting there in a slight daze.

"Better?"

"...*My ass is wet.*"

"Oh much more than that is I would assume."

"N-Not that! *This is your fault.*"

"Is it now? I accept the responsibility in whole. Do you disapprove?"

"...I d-didn't say *that.*"

"So what's the problem?"

"I'm in the fucking sink! Couldn't you have gone for the counter space at least?"

"Ohhh... I see. Shall I make amends?"

"Eh?"

With slight effort she sat on the rim and slid into the wet metal space next to Ryuko. Legs dangling side by side in the awkwardly tight fit there was plenty of room to either side, but she smiled through the discomfort of folding in half against two walls.

"There. Now we're eve-*n!*"

Relaxing into the position she dropped further into the inch of water trying to escape down the drain directly under her. Not so much as even able to wiggle with her arms out in front of her, she could do nothing but squeak when the water seeped fully through her jeans. Which brought a laughing storm out of Ryuko she couldn't help but giggle along with while her own cheeks went red.

"Now what was *that* noise supposed to be?"

"N-Not intentional... *ahem.* Well then, *now*, now we're even."

Falling into a silence they turned to look at each other before another round of giggles struck them.

"While being defeated by a glorified metal sink is all well and

good, I do believe we are now both in need of being *stripped and re-clothed*... And extracted. Can you get out?"

"There isn't a prison on earth that could hold me, and that was *before* the Life fiber bullshit. Better question, can *you*?"

"Given enough time *probably*, as of now not in the slightest. *Please help.*"

"Way ahead of ya."

Unleashing red fiber lines she employed the use of some metal ceiling beams as an anchor. Pulling herself up she got to work gently lifting them both out of the sink without damaging it, and more importantly Satsuki, in the process.

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Large white hat on her head, and empty cloth bag on a shoulder, Satsuki offered her free right arm to Ryuko. The woman almost looked offended at the old fashioned offer, but took it with a blush all the same. Simple sleeveless sundress swishing about her knees a stark contrast to, thankfully donned, clean replacement shorts, and stubbornly kept red *top* still visibly in place under an off a shoulder T-shirt.

Honestly, she'd have been insulted had Ryuko *caved in* to such an inconsequential demand so easily.

Moving down small streets a warmth beyond sunlight flowed from their shoulder to shoulder skin. It was a beautiful day, just enough wind blowing by to be comfortably cool, and it added up to just feel *right*. Everything felt like it *fit*.

Crossing one more road they reached the neighborhood's main shopping street and turned into the *bustle*. While magnitudes less than the noise and activity of the city proper the hawkers, radios, delivery trucks, pedestrians, and cars were busy enough to give life to the local center of commerce. Continuing on their path Satsuki angled her head down toward the pavement though, her eyes covered with her hat's brim. She still offered small greetings to the few neighbors they passed who were connected through the various local establishments, but they didn't stop moving once.

The neighborhood association had been quick to ensure official public lists either excluded, or otherwise obscured, the existence of the Kiryuin household in the area. They made sure the relatively quiet corner of the world as a whole *stayed quiet* after

the war, and had been doing so in its multiple iterations for generations.

Of course in return for the indirect form of assistance Satsuki had quietly taken up the necessity of playing local politics.

They didn't own the only walled property in the neighborhood, but in land size it was only rivaled by the local temple grounds and its event hall. And land ownership for a permanent residence came with certain informal responsibilities. Donations helping pay for local festivals and events were made, important meetings held once a month over events and civic duties in the neighborhood attended, dues for municipal services paid, and *of her own volition* her complicated relations with the women's association managed.

They had a reading club that, while she had yet to even *introduce herself* to, she strove to keep up with in her busy schedule. She was going to find the time someday to go to their once a month meetings, separate from the general meeting in the local hall, eventually. *Honest*.

Ryuko for her part was polite enough when needed, *usually*, but otherwise had not actively moved to be involved in any way shape or form with any of it. She had never brought up the subject, nor had Satsuki made any effort to push her into such discussion. And that was fine, if a little concerning.

It was her life and she would chose who to let into it, even if it meant she basically never socialized outside of work and calling Mako. All she had were her hobbies keeping her hands busy.

It didn't help that the neighbors were typically already intimidated enough talking to just Satsuki herself. No one had the nerve to ask about her *mysterious alluring wife*, beyond the usual nervous small talk wondering how things were going for them as a whole. *Busy but well enough* usually sufficed to settle the rare instance of brave curiosity directed at her, though she knew there were local gossip mills talking about them at length in hushed tones far from her ears. Today though, Satsuki could only guess at how much their neighbors could be dying to suddenly take more direct approaches. She could feel how much Ryuko wished to avoid it. Thankfully by virtue of timing they reached the usual corner grocer with only a handful of stuttering greeters along the way, none given enough time to formulate questions.

One can be in too much of a hurry for conversation, of course, but one cannot be *obviously* trying to evade neighbors. Especially going so far as to go out to the store at an hour of least probability of coming into contact with others.

That would be impolite after all.

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Produce procured, and disgruntled darling returned to her grumbling over metal, Satsuki stepped out again to fetch the morning mail from a box built into the side of the front gate. The wall insert had almost been left out of the original design plans with everything seemingly moving to digital formats, but it proved more valuable than originally anticipated in practice. After opening the rear panel she stood there thumbing through the various deliveries forwarded from a PO box while enjoying the warm morning air. Thin parcels ranging from restored hardcover novels she would find ever more shelf space to occupy with, to various catalogs and magazines destined for her other.

Carefully stacking the short bundle in her grasp she closed the mailbox and turned to go back, but stopped when a distinct metallic clang could be heard on the *other* side of the fence.

Interest piqued she reopened the mailbox and ducked to lean inside. Angling frontal slot open like a tank driver's view port she spotted an unusual scene on their street. The older man who lived directly across from them was sighing heavily over the open hood of his square sedan, the off-white world-worn vehicle stuck in the middle of the road just out of his driveway.

This wasn't the first time she'd spied the man working on his car, or others, but it was the first time he looked so defeated. She wasn't totally sure, but she had a notion that he knew what he was doing regarding engines. Glancing back toward the garage she also knew that Ryuko was struggling, and unwilling to reach out for help to those they knew *at all*, with engines.

With bundle secure against her chest, and vague ideas forming in her mind, she eased the gate open enough to slip out. Crossing out into the quiet street she was spotted and waved with her free hand.

"Good morning Mr.Onishi. I apologize for just intruding on your business, but you seem to be *troubled*."

The motion was returned with a sheepish smile from the balding father well over forty years her senior.

"Mechanical troubles of my own doing. Excuse the mess Miss Kiryuin, *ahh* and my manners. Is it missus now, *uh, mister?* I don't really... *um*, know how to address..."

"*Mister?*"

"S-Sorry! It's just... Love who you love I know, but you're both... And I don't... It's all rather new to me. And you're always in suits and tuxedos in the paper. Y-You're obviously not a- *Sorry.*"

"I have my preferences on professional wear, but the wife will happily attest to mine *physical femininity* I assure you. Names are fine."

"Lesson learned, ask first. In that case I must insist on Tachino."

"You're sure?"

"I know I've been around the block for a while, but don't make me feel *that* old! I already had to give up and call for help because of it... What brings you out on a fine week day like this instead of work though? I imagine you're all kinds of busy."

"Not *everyday*, but most days yes. We do make time to get away from the office occasionally. *Not always by choice.*"

Sadly smiling in understanding he invited her to sit on the car's fender as he leaned his own weight on it. She politely declined.

"*She's* not doing that well then?"

"Oh no, she's more annoyed at being forced to take it easy than anything else. A good surgeon, clean wound, we're just waiting for everything in the socket to be *assuredly* intact. Knowing her she'll probably find a way to get out of recovery time sooner than she really should though."

"Well that's good. But why are you out here alone then? Or are you in need of time away from each other already!"

"*Heavens no.* Just grabbing the mail. She's currently absorbed in tinkering with her latest motorized hobby acquisition."

"No kidding? With her fingers she's the one knocking around those engines you got? Figured you would keep those digits insured and protected at all hours."

"Underneath the soft exterior is a *hardened soul* that bristles at anyone, or anything, that would doubt her *capability*. She's careful enough to be fine doing what she wants of the sort when she wishes. You mentioned similar troubles?"

"I was an idiot yesterday. Went out after dark to top off fluids for the weekend, and I kinda managed to pour things in the wrong caps. Same car for decades and I mixed it up! Already kicking myself after it whimpered when I tried to back out."

"Is it dead?"

"Not sure. *Hope not*. Initial signs don't look good but I'm not as fit as I used to be, need to wait for reinforcements to pull it apart for the full once over. Made some calls and the guys are coming to help, they should be along soon enough."

More were coming. All technically inclined and veritably on their doorstep. The gears in her mind were now turning and connecting.

"Were you by any chance a mechanic?"

"Since I was sixteen I've worked on damn near everything with wheels! My wife only made me retire because she got fed up with the stains *haha!* Or maybe it was my bad back... If you need to pull out to go somewhere I can try throwing it into neutral and giving it a push--"

"No, that's kind of you but no. Not at the present."

Shifting the bundle in her grasp she glanced back over her shoulder.

If you can't bring a teacher to the woman, bring the woman to a teacher.

"So these people coming to help you are all associates?"

"Local drivers club. Every member is a bonafide gear head to the core with oil in their veins!"

"First I've heard of it."

"Bah the sticks in the mud who run the neighborhood have hated our guts for years. Noise this, noise that, ripping down a skid is half the fun! We got good roads here, we got guys patching potholes themselves cause the city takes too long and they don't even thank us."

"If it's just a matter of available hands Ryuko has been in need of things to do in her down time, I could convince her to help?"

"I couldn't pull two youngins apart on such a day."

"If that's the only issue, that can be easily rectified. I don't really have anything to do that can't be pushed to later. And it *is* rather pleasant out today."

"...You sure?"

"I've done more than my fair share of *physical work*. A moment."

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After a few minutes two individuals came back out the Kiryuin's gate. The first returning in fresh simple clothes ready for work. The second though, with her wild hair, pouting lips, and generous skin in need of sun was a presence to behold as she shuffled into the street. The talk of the neighborhood.

Satsuki they learned over time to be a reserved woman that did little outside the norms of a homeowner. Quite honestly to the gossip circle she was boring, until someone moved in with her bringing a motorcycle. Ryuko Matoi had been an unknown quantity. None were sure who the attractive recluse was or what she was doing there, which bred many theories that occupied many a discussion. Then the local directory updated to announce they were *spouses*, and her pricey provocative product line officially accredited.

The rumors went wild.

The tabloid spreads, official interview statements concerning a variety of topics, common wardrobe, and publicly seen interactions between the couple became an *endless* source of fascination. One able enough to draw Tachino's wife to the window with a phone in hand after getting a call of a *spotting*, summoning other local socialites to their own glass spying positions like moths to a flame.

"So stop me if I didn't hear this right, but you put *anti-freeze* I take it into the *OIL*. And then, *and then*, you let that fucker turn over!?"

The two were night and day. How they came together was a profound mystery to many, but the phrase *opposites attract* had been thrown around to *death*. While not actively involved in his wife's *hobby* he knew enough to not stare at the black material on her face, or hips, directly.

"Y-Yeah. I shut it down the second I heard a knock. Haven't moved it since."

"Damage?"

"I had enough nerve to check the dipstick, definitely hell's custard in there though."

She walked around him to face the engine directly. Leaning onto the front she plunged past the start of a warning into dismantling

a small pump with her bare hands. When she got an insert free of it she twisted around to sit while she ripped the paper filter apart. Hands getting messed up by the second without any hesitation.

"Ugh, nasty."

"Damn... The crank got enough turns in to emulsify it *real good* and shove it into the lines. Pan has to come out, everything needs to be drained, crank pulled which means the heads gotta get pulled, *which means the carbs gotta get pulled...* Ooo boy, this is gonna be a day."

Looking between the two Satsuki was uncomfortably lost. It had been expected, but she managed to put together enough to ask what was coming next.

"You mean the whole engine needs to be disassembled?"

"Sats its gotta be pulled, dismantled, and *scrubbed* if not outright replaced. As much as I can guess anyway."

"Right on the head. This is what I get for not using a flashlight."

Something was pricking at Ryuko's senses. Looking up from the ruined oil filter full of yellowish gunk, she turned her head to see the guy's wife staring at them from a door. Nervousness on her face after being caught. She called out to the old woman before Satsuki could notice as well.

"Hey, if ya got something to say step on over! I don't bite, er... *strangers.*"

She hesitated, but slowly made her way down the short path to the sidewalk.

"Tachi?"

"We've been offered advance aid before the cavalry arrives from the shop Aoi."

"But you two, aren't you..."

Shooting Ryuko a warning glare to be a little more *tactful* Satsuki took over.

"Neighbors are neighbors. If I recall you've been going to the meetings?"

"Y-Yes... I'd be infinitely grateful to anybody making sure Tachi doesn't ruin his back more, but-... Aren't... Aren't you two a little above this?"

"I work with my hands. My own four wheeled pain in the ass is sitting in pieces under a roof though."

"...And I need to remind *this one* to remember her manners."

"I'll act like how I wanna act when I feel like shit Sats, a'ight?"

"Ryuko..."

Falling into a low private argument the older couple stepped aside, on Tachino's insistence, to let *the Kiryuins* work out whatever little disagreement they were having *in private*.

"Reminds me of when we were that age."

"Tachi you can reminisce about the old days later, exactly how many people are going to be ruining our lawn this time?"

"It's gonna be a big job, but just enough to sort it out in a day. *Promise.*"

"You said the same thing last time and we had to replace the grass after that."

"Grass is grass, don't worry about it."

"*And how many are young, fit, and sparingly dressed women?*"

"*T-They offered to help don't look at me for that!* Free world, she's doing her own thing. Let them enjoy being young like we used to... Remember seventy-three?"

"You always bring up seventy three."

"Cause it was the start of a good time that never ended."

"...I have my eyes on you, sly dog."

"Better on me then them given how *they swing*, I won't accept you being stolen away from me--"

He accepted a light slap on the shoulder with a chuckle.

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Cars and vans turned up loaded with a veritable machine shop on wheels, prompting more curious heads to come from the area to watch. Surrounded by over a dozen individuals far more

knowledgeable on the subject than herself, Satsuki backed out from directly getting hands on with the vehicle. Taking a seat on the grass she looked on with curious spouses and was content watching the work unfold. She was able to hold light conversation with neighbors, watched kids running around at the periphery, and most of all kept an eye on how Ryuko was doing.

She ended up as the only woman in the very center of the group crowding the engine bay, but per her usual proved able to hold her own with the rest of them. As tool carts were brought out, large tarps laid down, and parts set aside she shared in laughs and manual labor alike.

The *camaraderie of purpose*.

All the while nodding her head and taking in information from the group as they pulled one system out after another.

Just because Ryuko was too stubborn to seek help, didn't mean she couldn't push the woman into a situation where she *just so happened to learn what she could use*. It was a hasty plan, and it abused the fact that when Ryuko was interested in something she was practically a *sponge* to information, but it was working.

Cleaning up in an offered bathroom Satsuki found herself near a kitchen full of volunteers putting together lunch for those working. The majority of them known members of the *rumor mill*. Knowing that Ryuko was fine she joined them and made herself actually useful much to their surprise, and set about putting her tongue to work engaging them directly.

By evening the little get together had turned into something of a block party. Groups who had come out to enjoy the day with friends and neighbors settled out under the sun. Food and alcohol was brought out and shared over property lines like a festival. And eventually cheers rang out as the saved sedan made a lap around the street as a parade by itself, the work squad sitting on its trunk.

Satsuki was faced with her own surprise when the group, evidently taking a shine to Ryuko, offered to help her with her own automotive work.

And she had accepted.

Soon enough the long black *land yacht* of a car was dragged out into the street. The rallied drivers club immediately sent members to get specific replacement parts from private stock piles, sorted the cooling system's problems, threw in various performance upgrades for good measure, and brought the machine's massive Detroit heart roaring to life with a toast of bottles.

By then the sky bled orange though, and the police finally showed up to break the unauthorized party up.

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Having been elbow deep in the *front lines* of mess, and beer, for the better part of nine hours Ryuko was in *dire* need of a scrub. Working car left to settle in the driveway Satsuki marched her up to the bathroom, got her on a stool, and set about getting every inch of her clean.

"You seemed to have enjoyed yourself."

"They know what they are doing, and know how to *party*... What about you?"

"*Hmm?*"

"You kinda wandered off somewhere, came back with sandwiches, and disappeared after lunch."

"I figured leaving things in the capable hands of those called upon was for the best. It was nice finally having the time to talk to the neighbors though, dispel rumors of our existence."

"You mean lie to them?"

"*Not so much, actually.* There *is* much to be kept private yes, but there was plenty besides that to find common ground in. Especially with the local association president."

"*Who?*"

Sighing she worked shampoo between her hands, with a healthy amount of *additive* mixed in, to thread through black and red locks carefully. "Long beard, bald forehead, thinks you are a *woman of loose morals* after you put tire smoke in his face that one time..."

Ignoring the scalp massage she tried to recall such a character. His frowning visage coming to mind after a rinse. "Oh. What about him?"

"I may have put a word in on behalf of those new friends of yours. Mr. Onishi has an appointment with him in a few days to get the so called *drivers club* officially recognized. Next festival could include them in the parade down the main street, and some kind of

drag race, from what I heard mentioned. And before you fall off the stool trying to turn around yes, yes you can go."

Disobeying almost immediately Ryuko ignored the warning and turned in place to stare up at her equally nude form.

"No argument!?"

Poking her on the nose Satsuki just smiled.

"*Who am I to deny thee the right to let fly thy metal steed. In a controlled and safe environment of course. For my sake though please start wearing a helmet, especially if it's a race, I've seen enough of your face mangled for one lifetime- R-Ryuko!!*"

Springing up Ryuko protectively wrapped her in a hug, shoved to the side, and tipped them both into the full bath in a large splash. Both surfacing Satsuki coughed and shook the water from her hair before sloshing a huge splash toward a troublemaker as she giggled.

"RYUKO!!"

Splashed back they quickly became entangled in a naked wrestling match. Instigator halfheartedly engaging the frantic attempt to hold her still by evading capture. Chasing her twice around the square filled with water, and over threads let loose for a soak, she finally managed to get Ryuko in a hold.

"*Hahaha!*"

"*CHILD! I WILL SCRUB THEE EXHAUSTIVELY FOR THIS AFFRONT!*"

"Did I use enough soup?"

"I WILL-... *What?*"

"We clean?"

Letting troublemaker go she realized the water was full of suds, more than one red vine was holding wash cloths and soap, and she was thoroughly covered in a bubbly coating.

"*What... What did you do? When did you-*"

"Sped up the process. Come on we gotta rinse."

"Have I missed something?"

"No, I've just decided we're going to go out for diner though."

"...But you're still in recovery, *technically*. You-"

"Don't give a damn about the public. You, me, fancy shit, good food, and live band. How bout it?"

Getting up out of the water Ryuko stepped over the side and held out her hand.

"You, willingly going to a formal only establishment *by choice*?"

"I'm hungry, and we've been busy today. Come on Eyebrows we're eating out."

Reaching up she grasped the hand, but didn't get up.

"Well... I will not say *no* my dear, *but first*~."

"Oi!"

Pulling as hard as she could she launched Ryuko back over into the water in another massive shower of suds. Coming back up Ryuko shook water off at her.

"*Fair is fair*~."

"Can we get this going?"

"If you insist."

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Sitting in her office she was supposed to grab a pair of shoes to go with her dress, but with them in hand she remained there mulling over a different item entirely. After tightening the straps around her ankles she reached out to pick up her phone. A massive transaction was still waiting for her behind its black locked screen. The very last approvals before executing it anyway.

She *wasn't* supposed to take it with her, but it *would* fit neatly into her purse. And because the financial machinations in motion were dependent on timing she couldn't hold off on this much longer.

The decision to take the device was rushed when footsteps approached. With no time to drop it inconspicuously she quickly tucked the thing into her color matching light blue carry on, and threw the strap over a shoulder.

"Hey, you find them?"

Turning into the doorway Ryuko had pulled out her suit, along with

some unexpected additions that managed to fully capture Satsuki's attention away from her dilemma.

"Good heavens above, is that a *tie!*?"

"*Oi...*"

Leaving her chair she was drawn to the other woman. Hands going to feel the fabric, straighten a pocket square, and generally take it all in.

For the first time either of them could remember Ryuko had to put fingers on her chin to get her face looking forward.

"I know I've got enough rack to go bowling, but my eyes are up here... *Okay, eye.* Whatever, I made a call and we got a reservation downtown to fill. Which means we're also gonna need parking. *So we gotta jet.*"

"Do you even know where we're going?"

"What makes you think I wouldn't?"

"You don't know the name of any restaurant without a deep fryer within earshot of the seating."

"I have the address and it's in our name."

"And you're *sure* of that?"

"*Yesss Eyebrows...* I didn't call the restaurant first, okay? I *uh, c-called Nonon for a recommendation...*"

Satsuki let her purse slide off and hit the floor.

"You handsome devil, who are you and what have you done with my wife?"

"I'm friggin twenty, *I can adult too! Sometimes.*"

"...You're wearing actual dress shoes."

"Yes, they are in fact *mine*. You ready to roll or not?"

Reaching down she picked up her bag before sinking fingers up into well combed hair. Running digits through the feathery mass she fluffed it until it was back to its usual charming chaos of eternal bedhead.

"Every devil needs a little rogue in them. Excessive *neatness* is not *you*."

"*Nee-saaann...*"

Smiling at the flustered woman she shoos her out of the office to get on their way.

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As a recommendation from Nonon would be the major draw of the place was a large stage, and the live band upon it filling the air with music. The food was good though and, at least when they arrived, the place was busy enough to be lively but not overly crowded. By the point they were arguing over ordering dessert though every table was filled.

"Just get a slice as well."

"I won't finish it, I've already had far too much in one day as it is. We can share."

"You're just going to make me order one, take it from me, and make me order a second."

"No. Just a bite or two."

"Yeah, *bites the size of a house*. I'm ordering two."

"You will do no such thing--"

"Waiter!"

"*Ryuko*."

"*Zip it*. Ah, Deux tranches de gateau au chocolat, s'il vous plait."

"Une tranche--"

"Deux!... Oui, merci... It's coming now Sats. *Two nice big piles of brown fudge goodness!*"

"You are once again murdering my diet in cold blood."

"You will survive a night of steak and brownies."

Leaning back into her seat Satsuki eyed her skeptically while swirling her wine. They had asked for a bottle of something average, yet after ordering fine beef cuts got a bottle of something far better compliments of the chef. And she already knew if that bottle wasn't done by the time they left they would either be insulting the cook who cared so much for his craft, or Ryuko

would attempt to have it *doggy bagged*. Pouting at a smirk she drained the glass and went for another fill.

"Shouldn't desserts be a different wine?"

"You're learning. Yes usually a subtle white wine goes with dessert, I have a strange feeling we will have no problems finishing this one off though before then."

Agreeing with the notion Ryuko poured the last of it out to fill her glass and poured it down her throat.

"Does that mean I earned *brownie points*~?"

The glare would have withered a lesser person to dust. Ryuko laughed.

"Dear, for *that* one would banish thee to the couch for a night."

"You wouldn't."

Busying her mouth with wine she just shrugged back.

"Is a sorry good enough?"

"Maybe."

In all reality Satsuki didn't particularly care about bad puns, but she grew concerned when Ryuko nodded to herself and got up.

"Ryuko?"

"How bout this then?"

Frantically reviewing the conversation it was under this careful scrutiny she figured her detached tone, practiced for years, may have been *too effective* to employ in such a minor discussion. Though she had little idea what Ryuko was actually thinking at this time. Deciding to track the woman down regardless and try to apologize she moved to get out of her seat, until the lights from above dimmed for the next music act.

The sight on stage gave her pause.

Sitting back down she was torn between rushing to stop her, and staying put to watch just what the woman was up to. If it was really about to be what she thinks Ryuko was doing.

After grabbing a microphone from a confused stage hand, she walked over to the band to talk with the conductor. It was only then on very close inspection that she realized said individual facing the other way was rather short in stature, and *rather visibly enthused*.

On reflection, of course a top recommendation from Nonon would also be a place she was willing to accept a booking from on a Wednesday night.

Her friend was sensible enough to not allow anything egregious, but then again her friend was *infatuated* with a certain woman's musical potential. To a point she might break her own rules, such as allowing a guest performer, in a *gig*.

Leaning back uneasily she settled in while Ryuko took her place mid stage.

"*Testing, tessssssting...* Good evenin folks, there's been a slight change in tonight's playbill. Everythin is perfectly alright, we're fine, we're all fine here, *how are you?*"

Did-... Did she just quote...

Even from four rows of tables away she could see the sparkle of a blue orb under stage lights from above. Voice like heavy refined silk doing what nothing else so far had managed, getting the whole room's rapt attention. And a short round of chuckles from those who recognized the line.

"Now I know what's been on the air is some *classical tunes*, but that ain't my style. Not my jazz. So I asked our fair little band camp manager over here about it, and she told me if I didn't like it I should do it myself or take a hike. I don't see a wooded trail anywhere near here though, so here we are."

Earning another round of chuckles people started recognizing her. One by one phones came out as stealthily as their owners could think they were being. Satsuki could already hear Houka bemoaning his life tomorrow morning.

"The furthest back in music I go is to a little place in New Jersey, and even then only a handful of em really ever stuck. One song in particular has kicked around my head for a bit though... And no, it's not about a *string around my finger* as uh *fitting* as that would be."

Getting another round of chuckles from the floor the room she judged that the audience was primed and ready.

"So without further *adieu*, I will get on *my way*. As old blue eyes himself would often say, *keep up with the changes boys*."

Snapping her fingers the band began to build into a soft melody starting with an acoustic guitar. Stepping further up to center stage she closed her eye to take a deep breath, and took the room for an emotional ride as soon as it reopened.

*"And nooow, the end is near.
And so I face... the final curtain.
My love, I'll say it clear.
I'll state my case, of which I'm certain...*

*I've lived, a life of burden.
I've traveled each annnd, every highway.
And more, much more than this.
I've found, myyyy way...*

*Regrets, I've had a few.
But then again, too few to mention.
I've done, what I had to do.
Saw it through, without exemption...*

*I never planned, any course.
Each step just a turn, off a byway.
And then, I crossed your ways.
But those were not ouuur way...*

*Yes, there were times, I'm sure you know.
When I've bit off more than I could chew.
But through it allll, when there was douuubt.
I ate it up, and spit it out!
We faced it allll, and we stood tallll.
And did it ouuuur way!*

*I've found love, I've laughed and cried.
I've had my fill, my share of loneliness...
And nooow, as tears subside.
I find it all, sooo amusing...*

*To think, we did all that.
And may I say, not held in a shy way.
Its been, one hell of a fine way.
And we did it, ouuur way...*

*For what is a soul, what has it got.
If just itself? Then I have naught!
To accept the things, I truly feel.
To find the onnne, who I need near!
The record shows, we'll take the blows!
And we keep going, ouuuur waaaay!!"*

Into the band's crescendo Ryuko returned to her place mid stage, and looked through the darkness to find her in particular. Covering her mouth with her hands Satsuki shook her head when Ryuko pointed right at her, and winked. As the music wound down back to a soft lull she put the mic back to her mouth to finish.

"Yes, I found my waaay... And it's, with, yooooou..."

When the song finally ended clapping rolled into a standing ovation. But Ryuko wasn't done. Reaching up to her head she grabbed the eye-patch and made a show of tearing it up off her head while rising from a bow. Shaking her hair back into place both eyes shone in the light, she smirked for the crowd taking pictures, and much to Satsuki's horror pointed her out again to motion her forward.

Put on the spot, literally under a spotlight swept over the floor, she had no choice but to get up and walk toward the stage under the applause. Ascending a set of access stairs they rejoined at center stage where an arm encircled her shoulder to hold her close.

"Sooo what do you think Sats, still aboard?"

The question hadn't been into the microphone, but the room heard it clear enough that the claps diminished. People waited with baited breath for the answer to a public love confession still unfolding.

"You want to know what *I* think of this?"

She knew that everything happening right now was going to be spread like a fire soon enough, if not already *live*. She knew that such actions were not how a CEO was supposed to act. Such actions were the stuff of cheesy action flicks and budget novels both of them had consumed *frequently*.

Taking solid hold of Ryuko's tie, *she didn't give a damn*.

Dragging woman forward she shoved her tongue into Ryuko's mouth to roaring applause and whistles. Emboldened the arm shifted down to rest around her waist, brazenly possessive for once. This was public, this was *real*, against all the naysayers and skeptics. Coming up for air Satsuki leaned back ending the kiss, and smiled accepting another short sloppy kiss in the cheek.

"You are *impossible*."

"You are *irreplaceable*~."

Eventually walking up to them from behind the conductor gently poked them apart to keep things rolling. Microphone taken from her Ryuko was prompted to finish her bows to the audience. Standing there clapping lightly for the woman herself Satsuki caught a glance back of a pink eye toward her. Through small military hand gestures they quickly worked out that they would be on the phone tomorrow. Nonon was *dying* to know what actually prompted this, but it would wait for tomorrow.

Patting Ryuko on the back she directed them to the stairs.

"Alright, *alright!* You've had yer ten minutes of headlining, now get off my stage before I report a trespassing womanizer got out of her yarn basket."

"You let me on, and that's just frankly irresponsible of you *ya runt~.*"

"No rehearsal, no direction, and no hesitation. I am *fully* aware of that you *madwoman*. Get out of here Red and take yer dame with you, some of us have work to do!"

"So same time next week~?"

"Oh *don't you dare even joke like that* or I'm holding you to it!"

When the next song of the night finally came on to wind the room down, and the patrons went back to their meals, they found their way back at their table and managed to finish in surprisingly relative peace.

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When it came time to turn into their street Satsuki objected, and made Ryuko keep driving aimlessly into the night. She was not done listening to the drone of the road, the soft tones from the tube radio, and their breathing all combined in a soothing blanket of white noise. Nestled into the crook of an arm a black jacket, and the arm that had been wearing it, was around her shoulders to protect from the minor chill of night. Shoes left on the floor so her stocking clad legs could curl up on the seat beneath her.

If this moment lasted in a bubble of existence forever, she would have been perfectly content to live within it. She didn't want it to end. But the real world beckoned from beyond the formless sea of city lights in the windows, there were things that needed to be said.

"Imouto?"

"Sup?"

"I wasn't serious about the couch banishment. There are things I will not accept under any circumstance, but I swear I will never force you out of our bed like some petty vindictive housewife. I'm

sorry if it seemed genuine."

"That? I know."

"You *did*?"

"It's nice to hear it straight, but I kinda had a feeling *ya know?* Yer... reasonable. Patient with my more... *questionable* decisions... and *uh, excessive needs.*"

"And you went up and did *all that* anyway?"

"...*Yup!*"

"*Why, exactly?*"

"Felt like it... *Felt nice.*"

Giving an understanding hum they fell quiet again as the city lights fully gave way to woodland and winding roads. The stars above now just barely visible twinkling above swaths of dark rolling green, the surface pock marked with small gatherings of light announcing civilization in the distance.

"Sinatra?"

"What about it?"

"I honestly didn't expect you to know anything of the sort."

"Can't play the rock era hits *everywhere.*"

"Know thy audience?"

"Used it exactly *once* in a place holding a theme night. It's not like I went out of my way to remember the set or nothin, it just sorta stuck around past its welcome somewhere in the back."

"Anything else lingering that I wouldn't expect?"

"*Oh, fuck I don't know...* I can take two cheap lighters apart and turn em into a tiny motorcycle, paid for the odd bottle of water or two selling em. Does that count?"

"*Fufufu~,* close enough... *Today was a good day.*"

"Told you the cake would get eaten."

"Beyond that. *Even if it was sinfully delicious.*"

"Alright I admit the neighbors ain't half bad. It's weird though."

"What?"

"Having *neighbors*."

"Even a drifter can settle down eventually."

"Well, *settling down ain't so bad after all...*"

Falling into another comfortable silence Satsuki took hold of the hand to her left and dragged it around her shoulder. Placing her own left next to the digits she traced the similar lines across their palms. Judged the length of bones to be similar if not identical. Fingering rings neither of them had taken off even once since they were put in place. The only real difference was the state of them. One was soft, immaculately perfect, and displayed not a hair or sign of the struggle it had endured. Let alone the work in oil from mere hours ago. The other hardened in places with firm callouses earned from a lifetime of sword swinging. Yet even with these imperfections when she put palm to perfect palm her fingers were voluntarily taken by the other set. Intertwined and gripped reassuringly with naught a care for their condition or past.

Then came the warm comfort through it. A feeling of wholeness. A feeling that made their beating blood shift to match pulse by pulse in perfect time... In a moment of profound clarity it finally clicked.

This feeling was *Synchronization*.

Ryuko had quiet literally opened up her body to a direct connection, and she had accepted it in whole without even realizing it.

Glancing down at her purse she knew what she had to do. Taking the intertwined fingers to her mouth she kissed them to get Ryuko's attention.

"Eh?"

"Can you pull over?"

As she reached for her purse Ryuko slowed the car down as asked, and brought them to a stop on the gravel next to the mountain road. Phone produced she pressed her thumb down to unlock the device, quickly started flicking fingers around to complete the actions in motion, and brought up the right page before handing it over to curious hands.

"What's this?"

"Read it."

Sitting up in her seat Satsuki wrapped her arms around her knees to let Ryuko inspect it properly.

The screen from near top to bottom was filled with numbers and names that seemed to go on forever downward. Scanning it she got the idea that it was some form of financial report she had to read for work reasons, until she reached the bottom line.

Where she realized that it wasn't Satsuki's name on it.

It was hers.

Shooting back up to the top of the page she realized it was a holdings statement. Incredulous Ryuko's head whipped around fast enough to rock the car.

"You signed over the whole *fucking conglomerate!*?"

"I've handed over almost complete ownership of the conglomerate, and most of my ownership of the main corporation under it, so yes. As of now, technically, you are my boss."

"The fuck!? After all the bullshit paper work, all the arguing with the government spooks, and all the late nights you just up and give it to me!?"

"You said it yourself, *it's our way*, right?"

"Yeah but you have things you actually want to accomplish, right? Things that I don't know because they're complicated as fuck probably. I never wanted your money damn it--"

"Please, just hear me out. I've been thinking about this for a long time. I just didn't know how to proceed, let alone how or when to tell you. So bear with me... I should have a slightly more up to date hard copy printed out by tomorrow morning if you wish to review it in full."

Turning the key Ryuko shut the car off and gave the phone a second glance before handing it back. She'd never really payed that much attention to the household finances, she saw the mountain of paperwork once and just left it all to Satsuki, but the long numbers at the bottom were concerning.

Left in dark silence Satsuki's chin returned to her knees while under the scrutiny of bewildered eyes.

"Yes, I have goals in life. I cannot quantify them completely but they sum up into three categories. Prevent alien invasion, make the world a better place, and do everything I can for you for as long as physically possible. The first is nearing everything that can be done logistically speaking, the second is remarkably broad

so I won't delve too much into the little details, but the third is now officially in motion and honestly the reason I made the company."

"You rebuilt a fucking conglomerate just to make me a *retirement fund!*?"

"Yes and no. In order to do any of those goals naturally I needed capital. When life gives you the corpse of the largest clothing company in history, you use what you've got. Even after all the penalties and repayments what was left was more than enough to get the ball rolling again. To keep it rolling we needed those investors until cash could be raised from assets. It was tied up in land REVOCS owned to hide it across the globe. Hoomaru was sent to sell off everything what wasn't worth keeping, and ensured none of those properties could be *problematic* in the process. The proceeds allowed the re-privatization, but also a spreading out into holdings I needed to acquire. Now that the Corporation and the affiliated businesses our friends own, who received stock in exchange for equal share in said businesses going to the conglomerate's ownership, are solidly on their feet posting profits the grand financial machine I have been devising is in motion. The next step required giving near absolute *unarguably commanding* ownership, to you."

"...Eh?"

"There is a simple fact that both of us have to accept Ryuko. No side stepping it, no shoving it away for later... I have an expiration date, and that is precisely why I decided to do this. To do what I set out to do I needed a corporate machine to fund it, but for that same machine to be capable of doing so would make it resilient enough to out live me. It would be to my greatest shame if this wealth were ever funneled into evil ever again, or to the wicked vipers in suits that would try to claw at ever more of the *Kiryuin fortune*. Which is precisely why I have to give it to you. They can't claw it from you. I know you. Even when you were literally dying from thirst you stood in the middle of a blood bath and refused to drink a drop. I trust you more than anyone, and you have proven my trust to be valid time and time again."

"S-...S-Sats..."

"All I need you to do, is trust me the same. Please allow me to continue my work with these funds and manage it all on your behalf. By being its owner you provide a legal security beyond anything else possible, and while the eventual true yield will be glacially slow to come it will give you a security later in life *like no other*. Ryuko Matoi as a Kiryuin will never sleep under a *fucking bridge* again. You will have centuries to take this seed earned by blood, by our parents, and turn it into a fortune greater than any before it. And with that wealth there could also

be no end to the good you could do... When I'm gone. I'm not telling you how to live your life though, or to try and fulfill my dreams long after I... Cease to be. But... I want you to be aware of the opportunity. Even if you don't chose to do anything of the sort, knowing the fortune will never fall into the wrong hands is a massive weight off my shoulders. Knowing you will have the resources to be cared for the greatest relief I can have. I can help the world in any way I can, and I can help you, thanks to this arrangement. *Everybody, wins.*"

"Sats..."

"Which brings us to a final point regarding my administrative capacities I suppose. Ryuko Matoi Kiryuin you are now the majority shareholder, and owner, of both the Kiryuin Conglomerate and its subsidiaries. I have transferred to you most of what I personally owned. You are now the boss. If you so wish... I will step down as CEO to *lighten the load on my plate*... Days with you have been the best in my life, better than my wildest dreams many times over. While I am physically able to do so I would be willing to give you what I promised in our technical wedding vows. Traveling on a whim, enjoying each others company, and living life to the fullest. When I'm old and gray I can return to wasting away behind a desk and do my work then, but until then the least I can do is offer you my youth to enjoy to its fullest as well-"

"Satsuki!"

The yell shook her from staring at the hood ornament. Glancing to her right Ryuko's elbow was braced against the wheel so she could hold up her forehead with a hand. Bright blue eyes tearing up as she gulped.

"Y-You... You would put the keys to literally everything you're building, and F-... Fib-... Grr-... *God. DAMN. EVERYTHING* you want to do in life, in my hands? Your success, your goals, your dreams, your time, your fucking blood, sweat, tears, and the shirt off your back!?"

"You've given me more of a personal life than I ever deserved. I desire little of material wealth, and it is my hope that you will continue to let me do everything I can to make up for my sins... But even without that I have friends, I have hobbies, and I have you. You... My sister, my wife, and my emotional rock all rolled up into one strange existence that I love and cherish above all else. There is no price too high, no sacrifice too great, for me to make for you... *So...* I suppose its my turn to ask about that road. I leave the future up to you, if you'll have me."

Smiling she reached out to gently take hold of Ryuko's face, and wiped a tear away with her thumb.

"*W-What the fuck Eyebrows... What the actual fuck ARE you!?*"

"Happy~."

Barely remembering to undo her seat belt Ryuko moved across the bench and swept her into a hug. Face buried in the crook of her neck the woman's fibers burned alive with red light telling of a blush. Quietly Satsuki hummed while stroking the back of her hair.

"...Nee-san?"

"Hmm?"

"Fire your ass? You think you could drop a responsibility bomb in my lap like that and *retire*? Oh no, *no, no, no, nooooo...* I'm sorry but your *fat butt* is going *nowhere* you hear me!?"

"*Fufufu, yes ma'am~. I will do my best to hopefully live up to your expectations... Thank you Ryuko, thank you for being there for me.*"

"Sats?"

"Hmm?"

"*You're lucky I can't have a fucking heart attack.*

A chuckle came out through her nose, prompting Ryuko to add a "*S-Shut up.*" that left them silently holding each other.

Letting the time go by it was around two in the morning when Satsuki finally decided to force another issue.

"You know we need to get back home. The end of the month is coming and we need to be ready... Ryuko?"

"*You just put me through some shit Eyebrows... I c-can't fucking drive in this condition.*"

"You've done more than enough for me there, I can get us home."

Finally leaving the embrace Ryuko eyed her warily while sniffing.

"Uh, you're sure about that?"

"I have a license. Do you doubt me?"

"Have you ever even *touched* a column shift?"

"I can manage. Just relax, we will be home soon."

Slipping back into her shoes they shifted around to trade positions. Buckling in Ryuko was slumped down in her seat with

puffy eyes and a sinking feeling. Behind the wheel Satsuki acquainted herself with the various rods behind the steering wheel before using the key. Turning wheel to make a U-turn she grabbed the shifter and pushed the gas.

Producing a burst of nasty grinding noise that made her let go of everything in a hurry.

"Sats... *Three pedals.*"

"Clutch, *right.* You should have said it was like a stick shift."

"I should probably just--"

"Nonsense it will be fine."

"Clutch, *and?*"

"And? *And...* Oh, hand break. *Right.* Thank you."

This time using the right motions she got the car turned around and rolling. Moving back toward civilization she managed to get to second gear, and decided that was good enough to get them home instead of risking damage to the gearbox. The engine was revving like mad, but she was pleased with herself. Ryuko just smiled, plugged her ears trying to ignore the steel screaming, and internally apologized to the poor machine being put through a rather *rough* end to its first day on the job.

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It was an early morning that saw the flurry of activity within a certain household. Officially the convoy would leave the driveway around seven to ensure that they would not possibly be late for the eight-o'clock destination time. Everything thus far was going to schedule, except for one hang up in the form of a distressed woman who had been agonizing over her wardrobe for the last few days.

Pressed for time Satsuki forced her to sit on her old bed and in rapid succession chose yes or no to everything she pulled out of a closet.

Until everything she considered presentable for the occasion was exhausted.

"Ryuko just make a choice already."

"I can't! I don't even know what you wear to this kind of thing!"

"Professional, presentable, reasonable."

"My profession means crazy. *Artsy bullshit!*"

Reaching the end of her patience her original stipulations went out the window. Walking into the closet she grabbed a metal footlocker and two dress bags hanging on their own all near the back. Two were choices, the third was insurance.

In the room proper she put one bag on a stand to Ryuko's left, the other on a similar stand to her right, and stood before the footlocker dragged out between them.

"I will make this simple. One or the other. If you will not decide then you are going as *the fox*."

The indecisive face went pale.

"Oi, I can't do *that*! That shit is literally belts and a bikini!"

"Surplus military uniforms are *fashionable* in some circles. And you *most certainly* have the figure for it."

"You're serious!?"

"*Very*."

Ryuko knew what was in the bags. The dress on the left was her *golden gown*. To the right the hanging form of black that had catapulted her face out of the boardroom and onto billboards. Unfortunately even after many hours of work meticulously fixing it, that one was still damaged in sections she had yet to repair completely.

"Choose."

"This ain't much of a choice, I can't take the old one out as it is. *Plastic thread is fucking hard to sew in*."

"Well that narrows it down significantly, doesn't it?"

"Now hold on a second Eyebrows."

"We don't have the time. Consider it a suggestion you have exactly two minutes to decide on. We need breakfast, we need prep, we need to get there, we need to ensure everything is ready--"

"I'm going! I'll pick something and be down soon..."

"Please do."

"Are you ready?"

"Whenever you are."

.

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With great fanfare the doors opened to allow lines of people to file into the official sales front to the re-established Kiryuin brand. While other specialty outlets would continue to carry certain lines, *for now*, this location across the street from central offered everything in one place. From the most basic daily essentials, to custom tailored suits, to a *specialty custom service in the works*, it was everything they *could* offer.

And as predicted product was *flying*.

After ceremonially unlocking the doors and fielding a short interview, Satsuki had retreated to the maze of service backrooms to decompress. She was content to watch the masses with Inumuta on monitors in the main security office, instead of being anywhere near them.

Hours after opening she folded her arms and studied the wall of images lighting up the otherwise dark room. The lower floors were busy, middle floors showed a tapering off as the public milled about the formal lines of black label, and somewhat expectantly all three *Red floors* at the top of the building's retail half were teeming with activity. Huddled groups were talking among themselves. *A lot of slightly awestruck, happy, huddled groups.*

"Something wrong ma'am?"

"Did Ryuko make it to the uppermost section beyond the retail floors with Iori, or has she made an error and is in dire need of an *extraction*?"

"Automated locks clocked her checking into her dedicated office fifteen minutes after the doors opened... *Huh*. Curiously clocking out moments later. Wasn't she supposed to be there today setting things up for later in the week when she is supposed to start custom work orders?"

"Yes she was. Any reports of her whereabouts?"

"Let me ping the floor managers and security."

Letting him swing his chair to face a different station she continued her careful studying while he talked to various individuals.

"What!? Lady Satsuki?"

"Report?"

"I've been informed by the managers of floor twenty that they cannot comply with my request for information."

"Really now?"

"They have been ordered with a clearance level above my own."

"Considering I have not done such a thing, there would only be one other who *could* have. Houka?"

"Yes?"

"Inform security to make sure crowds are to be under control."

"...Whyyy?"

Her left hand found it's way to her belt. Palm resting upon the crystal hilt of her sword ready for an *expedition*. Ryuko had convinced her to wear a *well* fitted charcoal dress, the weapon was her idea. Kept *just enough* air of unapproachable to stop anyone from trying to get *too close*.

"Because I am going into the heart of the storm to retrieve mine *scalawag* declaring mutiny."

"As the primary watcher of our media presence, I ask, *nay beg*, you to reconsider having a... *moment* in the middle of launch day. It would be problematic. Especially after her sort of announcement of being in good health the other day, and your *uh* response... I can get security in there to--"

"Nay lieutenant. Hold the fleet on steady course, mine away team will be entirely *sufficient*. As you said, *best to not make a scene*."

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Stepping out of a service elevator Satsuki made her way through the storage section of floor twenty. Coming face to face with the surprised rank and file gathering stock to replenish shelves she told them continue as they were, before she stepped out from the back and onto the sales floor itself. Stalking down aisles she occasionally stopped to inspect the designs and offerings organized in neat rows.

Item identification cards were entirely written *by hand* and signed by members of the design team from across the street, every bin was chosen to color coordinate with its contents, and on top of the shelves inside glass cases were strikingly adorable little model vignettes she hadn't heard about. Entirely made of fabric scraps each scene was a snapshot of various stages of production of the lingerie on display, in the fantasy style of a *north-pole elven workshop*. Complete with simple button eyed representations of what must have been every single person who worked in the department.

Just how much time and effort did they spend on this!?

If anyone noticed her presence among the crowd they didn't make a show of it, security had been very firm on the ban of photography in the building. Making her way around she eventually came across a relatively deserted section in a corner. And the last square case on its own pedestal in the center of it.

Inside was a tiny mock up of Ryuko's design office with a *thank you for coming!* stitched into the gray fabric tile floor. Scene complete with a pair of simple short figures like the others standing side by side holding hands, and reaching out with their other hands in a frozen wave to the viewer.

Even in fabric form she would recognize that hair made of black and red lace trim, and her own black bar eyebrows over tiny blue button eyes.

Her nose pressed to the glass like a child with wonder in her eyes. She scanned everything, picking out the *thousands* of tiny details and miniature clothing items strewn about the display. It was nearly a perfect replica as far as she could tell, just entirely made from lingerie scraps.

It was just too much. Damning the rules she pulled her phone out of a belt pocket to immortalize *Silk-suki and Rinzu-ko* as a background image.

Tearing her attention away from that she looked at the displays surrounding it on almost all sides. The white plaster busts and mannequins around her were all in items remarkably similar to experimental drawings she knew lurked in the house. Now she knew why this display had its own corner. Flicking through the bins under one mannequin in particular lounging on top of a specific display, *with a remarkably similar set of proportions to her own*, she found that her own specific sizes were in stock.

Of course.

Holding up an exceedingly minimal red pair of panties she took it and grabbed it's matching bra from a bin on the shelf above.

Grabbing up two other sets quite obviously designed with the word *intimates* in mind she draped them over her arm, and made her way toward the fitting rooms. Walking past a blushing woman walking out she waved down a nervous floor manager, specific question answered with a polite "*L-Last room on the left m-ma'am.*"

Thanking the woman she made her way down as instructed and entered a slightly open door to an individual room.

Sitting in front of a mirror wall in one of two chairs in the space was indeed Ryuko. She was quickly scribbling into her little red book in her lap, making sleeves flap around as she did. A red heel swaying with her bare leg stretched out from the white under layer miniskirt as she did whatever she was doing. Otherwise oblivious to anything else.

Somewhat amused at the opportunity Satsuki closed the door and knocked the frame twice. Black and red wildly upturned hair not so much as shifting Ryuko uttered semi-enthused lines for what sounded like the hundredth time today.

"Welcome to our little store, I'm sorry but I'll be *right* with you. Please put what you got on the seat to yer right. I do have to ask if you are comfortable with shedding some layers, for a proper fit measurements must be taken from as close to skin as possible. If yer cool with that the hangers and hooks to your left are for anything you got on you. I can help if needed before we begin."

Playing along Satsuki dropped the bundle things she had picked out onto the chair next to her, and undid her sword belt to hang it up. Reaching up behind her back she pulled a zipper down and extracted herself from the dress. Ryuko was still scribbling away and occasionally tapping her chin with a pencil the whole time. Standing in black heels and simple gray undergarments she hung the dress properly before quietly freeing the sword from it's home. Shimmying out of her thong she grasped it in her off hand. Moving to stand behind Ryuko's chair she braced the sword edge across an exposed throat, and quickly pressed the gray material over the woman's mouth to muffle her surprise.

Inhumanly powerful senses used it to identify *the assassin* before a fight could start.

"*Sats!?*"

"If I am not mistaken thou hast declared a mutiny upon the ship for reasons I cannot ascertain. I'm *dying* to hear just how you could possibly justify these actions *ma'am~.*"

"Is the oversize knife to my neck necessary?"

"*Let me have my fun... Consider it a bit of role play.*"

"We both know I can be stab proof--"

"Don't deflect, surrender thy store of information to customs for investigation!"

Hesitantly Ryuko complied by holding it up in surrender. Letting go of the thong Satsuki plucked the leather book from her fingers. Blade returned to its sheath she sensually walked back over and plopped backward into Ryuko's lap. Leaning back against the nervous woman she made herself comfortable while cracking open the pages. She was, as far as she knew, the first other person to read the repository of *trade secrets*.

Turning the pages she found black and white sketches. *Hundreds* of sketches of what she realized were the company's models, female employees, various gas station attendants, store clerks, general runway models, herself, and *self portrait work* all capturing snapshots of everyday life. The product of a photographic memory and fine motor control. Except every one of them, regardless of background figures or scene around them, was in nothing more than underwear. Scanning the edges of pages each drawing had a person's name if known, lists of body dimensions, small blown up sections to expand on details, and on a small number of them *song lyrics*.

It was a compendium of daily life from Ryuko's point of view, through a lens of *day dreams*.

"R-Ryuko..."

"I can explain! It's not *uh*, I don't-... It just happens-... Ideas-... All I came here to do was quality checks I swear!"

"*What?* Ryuko what are talking about? This is beautiful. I'm no expert but the line work, the expressions, the creativity in using scene to dictate design its all *terrifically* well executed. *Trade secrets*. You weren't kidding, this is literally your department's design documentation, and *then some*. This is what flows through your mind on a daily basis?"

"Sometimes?"

"And this *isn't* what you were doing here?"

"J-just an inspection of the stuff as it gets brought in randomly. I only figured it on the way up! A last double check... Last four pages."

Thumbing through the thing she skipped past the sketches, half formed personal notes on materials, and a section of blank paper until coming across what could be considered a chapter of information. In a neat tiny font page after page was filled with lines of numbers and either a check or short critical comments on

issues. Scanning down she read some aloud.

"Item B-0045 batch 091, tone completely wrong, FFAB50 specified FFA13C actually made to run... Item B-0039 batch 063, left front cup hem one miss stitch, could be systemic of whole line, yell at Yamada... Item B-0012, batch 135, who the fuck authorized the wrong lace pattern, used last revision with too much fringe..."

Getting up Satsuki turned around to sit on Ryuko's legs again while facing her, with a smile and small laugh. Handing the book back to the nervous woman she took her thong back from where it had fallen over a pair of scissors.

"What were you worried about so much that you ordered an information blackout?"

"...A kinda perpetually horny *because medical reasons* lesbian in a fitting room thoroughly inspecting bras? It's kinda... *suspect*."

"Ryuko I took that into consideration before even offering you the position. Your job is making comfortable and attractive lingerie. You wear it, and you find it appealing in every sense, you are exactly the kind of individual to put in charge of making it. And taking pride in your work is wholly commendable dear. I'm only here because we are in the middle of launch day and a whole floor was ordered to not report in activity. You can't do *that*. If sections don't talk to each other things break down. You can run your department as you see fit, but please try not to compromise the others."

"Oh... *Huh*."

"If I had any inkling that you would have taken advantage of your position to sexually harass people, you can bet *your ass* we would have been having some very different discussions up to this point in time."

"*Trust...*"

"Trust. If you're not sure on an executive decision, *talk to me*. Right?"

"...Right."

"Good! With that settled I believe you had work to continue."

Unhooking her bra she took the items and asked Ryuko to store them. Standing up she went to the middle of the room and studied herself in the mirror while only wearing a pair of heels.

"*Uh...* Sats I told them not to send people to this room when the door is closed, but they don't lock."

"Then I suppose we run the risk of being walked in on, *hmm~?*"

Reaching out she picked up a red bra with its security clip between the cups and pointed it out to Ryuko.

"Well Mistress Kiryuin, *aren't we going to get started~?*"

Getting out of the chair Ryuko looked past her at the door, before giving her full undivided blushing attention to the nude form. Delicious woman standing in a manner just shy of a salute with her hands folded against the small of her bare back, bra loosely dangling by a strap down her butt, as she smiled mischievously.

"We?"

"Who said you would need anyone else for this? If you're inspecting mammaries clad in finery for the day, *then I'm first before anyone in that line~.*"

"Are you *suggestin* that you will take on trying everything that needs trying?"

"*I am but a humble employee to your business, Mistress. One who's duties are entirely determined as they are needed~.*"

Leaning forward so they were cheek to cheek Ryuko reached around to take the bra from her hands. After threading it into place over arms she pushed her chest to its front, and reached around behind to hook it together. The unusual title usage was making her frown, but the heat radiating off her skin was unmistakable.

"...I mean if you want to put yourself through this I got no problem giving you a lot of *thorough inspecting*. And if it's you, *well*, we can get *really thorough...*"

"No waver in thy breath? No fluctuation from a fluttering heart? Is this *pure confidence I detect? Mistress~?*"

She could almost hear Ryuko's eye twitch in annoyance. Voice, while low, picked up a growling warm edge, one she'd thought on more than on occasion as almost brandy for the ears. It was a rebellious tone long since discarded by the former delinquent youth forged of underage drinking and lavatory smokes. It had been a long time since it had been used at length, longer still to deliver her an address.

"Sats?"

"Yes?"

"Everyone must be wearing underwear during a fitting."

"I'm afraid I seem to have *misplaced* mine. *May I borrow yours~?*"

Taking a step away the red book and a pencil came back to Ryuko's hands. Slowly walked around Satsuki did her part inhaling, exhaling, and raising her arms up for the evaluation of the product. Fingers occasionally tugging, threading into, and caressing material throughout the process.

Hearing the scribble of pencil finish behind her she tried to lower her arms and turn around, but was stopped by a stilling touch of a finger on her shoulder. Feeling a pinch of the band the bra was pulled up off her chest, up her arms, before suddenly being twisted into a tight knot around her wrists. She thought it was part of the *thorough evaluation*, until Ryuko held it there with her iron grip for longer than really necessary for a test of *build quality*.

"No."

The answer was matter-of-factly delivered, and ran counter to any notions she had about Ryuko's mood. Unable to twist her head far she settled on looking at her through the mirror before her.

"No?"

She felt the gold on Ryuko's chest press to her back as the woman leaned up against her to whisper to the back of her ear.

"No. I'll reconsider after you bring back ten more."

"And how do you suppose I go out there to get them?"

"You have a dress."

"It's a bit thin to just--"

"The front material drapes down from the throat. *Only you and I would know.*"

The abnormal actions of the woman purring in her ear brought goosebumps to her skin. Cold air running down from a vent did nothing to suppress the heat blooming with them.

Ryuko as a lover was a near infinite well of energy, but entirely focused on not pushing things with her given her past experiences. It was sweet, really. But she had to admit it was jarring when the woman suddenly stopped to ask about *every little thing*.

This was a completely different animal she'd only had the pleasure of encountering once. Although, that had been through the fog of a drugged stupor. The prospect of experiencing a love strong enough to almost maim her, *while sober*, brought out a shudder that rolled down her spine and settled into a throb between her thighs.

This, was *not* how she thought the day would have progressed. *Not that she particularly minded.*

"Considering such testing will *strain* these garments what will happen to them afterword?"

"Can't return them to the shelf after tugging them too much. If we don't buy 'em, we'll have to dispose of them."

"And what would we do with some few dozen extra unmentionables *if I did?*"

"Well, I could come up with some... *ideas.*"

Such an innocent word left noticeably out on its own, yet given in such a way to promise actions that would be *anything but.*

"Ryuko?"

"You know I hate the stupid title."

"...What are you going to do about it? *Mistress~?*"

Goaded on a graceful hand swept up from her hip, to her side, to cup the bottom of a breast. Digits' touch leaving a path of tingling aroused sensations from start to finish. Every breath near her neck seemingly filled with hunger.

"*Don't you remember Nee-san~?*"

Left waiting for words that the woman was not uttering she swallowed thickly to try and concentrate on their cryptic meaning. *Remember what?* All the while a soft roaming hand payed her nipples some sensual attention.

A pinch to her left aroused point, and an almost too soft to notice graze of teeth across her jugular, joined the lust fueled assault on her better judgment. The wave came without warning. Like a bolt of lightning her lungs filled sharply, her abs tensed, and her hips *bucked*. Just for a moment, just an inch, before the edge subsided back into a need smothering her sense of reason. It was frustrating, it was heavy, and it made her thighs clench together.

And then all at once her wrists were released from the bra binding them, the weight against her back was removed, and Ryuko busied herself depositing the item in a duffle bag under her previously occupied chair.

Left standing there naked, aroused, and *utterly confused* she didn't move until Ryuko stepped back in front of her. Grabbing the woman's shoulders while blushing she leaned forward to glare at

her for stopping.

Ryuko smirked back before gently raising her hands to push off those holding her.

"You know the rules Satsuki, no sex in the changing rooms~."

"...B-.... But-"

"If you're going to call me Mistress, I'm going to fucking treat you like one."

Stepping around her Ryuko faced the door, but threaded her arms back around Satsuki's waist to pull them together. Throwing her head back over a shoulder she brought her mouth to an ear.

"I'll step out to inform the staff to continue normal operations, bar our little new testing mission, and will be back shortly so we can get through the next two bras before I send you out to the floor for more. It should only take a moment to round up the three people, but in the meantime think about what color lace you would like tying your wrists to a bedpost~."

"Dear, it's a terrible thing to leave someone with such a heavy decision to make..."

"No. It would be terrible though to tell you that I finally bought a proper strap on a few days back, and fully intend to break it in as soon as we get home~."

"...You did what?"

"Prepared for a very eventful celebratory Sunday, tomorrow, with the missus~!"

Kissed on the cheek from the awkward position she was released, and left to her own thoughts after watching a swaying dress train slip out the door. With a dying need to know she went over to check her phone for the time, it wasn't even noon yet. Putting her head against the wall she took a number of deep breaths to try and compose herself.

When Ryuko came back she was still leaning against the wall. When a sea-green bra came into her view, she mechanically threaded her arms into the straps so it could be nestled properly. And properly involved hands dipping into the cups from behind for a short round of breast manipulation. The contact confirmed that Ryuko's hands were dripping with feelings of arousal as before, with no sign of relief in sight.

"Imouto... if you don't break that thing by tomorrow after subjecting me to this, I am going to fuck you hard enough TO break it by the end of tomorrow. I swear it."

Ryuko laughed while dragging her back to the center of the room.

"Is that a bet?"

"Is that a challenge to one?"

"It can be."

"Are you going to keep letting your lust flow into me all day?"

"Was I?"

"Woman, don't you dare play coy with me after all of *THAT*. You *HAVE* been holding out on me!"

"Whatever do you mean, dear~?"

"Ye wicked rascal I should have made thee walk the plank when I had the chance..."

"I love you too Sats~."

Through the next several hours of *working* together, Ryuko may have neglected to mention that she had reinforced a certain harness herself to ensure its *structural integrity*. Quality leather, armor grade alloy steel fittings, and *Kevlar stitching*.

Though that little tidbit of information would be safely held for Monday morning. Specifically *after* making a phone call that they would be staying home because Satsuki was *under the weather*. Her ego deserved being saved after putting in every effort she could muster.

For who was she to tell Satsuki what was, and was not, physically possible. Like anything else she put her mind to it would be done eventually. It was just a matter of time.

And like everything else, Ryuko would live each moment with her in that time to the fullest. It was a vow made stepping off the train and being swept up into the arms of the one she loved. To spend even a second contemplating elsewhere would just be a second wasted.

My Way – “Frank” Sinatra, lyrics edited by Ryuko

One scrap about two Kiryuins getting naughty in a fitting room, a couple conceived notions on the nature of Life Fibers, many nights of my free time in writing, and many *many* months of agonizing over *damn near everything*, but here we are.

Where do I even *begin*...

I would like to thank everyone who's actually liked my amateur at best production, everyone who's given and continues to give constructive feedback, and the hundreds of others who come back for every update to look at the hot mess go by!

And boy has it turned out different than how I originally envisioned. I'm going to be frank, and I know many might have noticed, but near the end of this ride there is a *lot* of holes. Way back before I really chose a direction for this series it was going to turn into something very different around the art exhibit chapter.

For example Uzu was going to be shot by an assassin out for Kiryuin blood, he'd survive, but that hit to his shoulder was the original reason for his trepidation during the infiltration mission in Osaka regarding the ability to free climb.

And much more after that, but to make a long story short I chose against doing that. The story took on its own path and really just all turned into a rambling slice of life... And that's okay, it really just was a first dip into *any* kind of writing. Which leaves us with an *odd*, ending. But it is *A* ending.

I know the question is coming, *will there be more?* In the folder for the *Tailor AU* I have 44 sub folders and 278 files, almost all of them text files of scraps, drafts, unpublished ideas, *etc.* I could do a lot. So I'm not ruling the odd stories out, but I also am coming to a point that those unused ideas are being used elsewhere and it's becoming hard to track what is cannibalizing what. So at the very least I will be putting the misadventures of *Red and Eyebrows* down for the time being.

The rest will continue however. I am not going to stop writing, *hopefully*, just taking a break from this singular specific AU I have dumped something like 100k words into without really meaning to. *I suppose putting too much of my own fetish into it may have had something to do with this... Yeah, I'm afraid that's not going anywhere... unless people hate it...* Moving on.

This leaves me with a slot on the docket to fill because my process requires having more than one story to bounce between when I get stuck in a section.

-Elves running with scissors is continuing. Fell out of the rut to ensure *this* chapter would finally get made. Tuning angst levels before setting things in writing.
-Journey is odd because it can only happen when inspiration hits, which could happen so I guess that's a maybe.

Other than that I could focus on more of the one shots, or pick up one of a few long runners that have been on the back burner for *years* now. Much to chose from, too little room to list them. And suffice to say it will focus on the best sisters one way or another.

I won't call it a vote, because it is entirely subject to change and my mood, but if anyone cares some suggestions toward direction could be appreciated. Such as:

-Raunchy / Plain (there is more of the former than the later, but still.)
-Medieval / industrial / contemporary / sci-fi / space faring. (pure time setting)
-Tone(no set categories but be reasonable) I tend toward the darker in most of it, but I can take it in consideration to put a lean toward lighter or darker. (There is a limit, *vantablack dark*, it exists no I will not post it.)

(Specific examples for what a choice set could point to among others, but also know some options may not lead to something that exists.)

-Raunchy / contemporary / dark = KKK pure fem Omegaverse, it earns its hard E rating, people will be uncomfortable with what goes down. I guarantee it.

-Plain / space faring / in the middle = A tragedy-ish based on Magnetic Rose. Likely a one shot, but could be longer depending on what I decide to use.

-Raunchy / sci-fi / light = Police AU, sort of. I mean shit happens because everything isn't perfect, need a plot, but the focus is on the worst-*best* buddy cops they can be to do the job. Could also be industrial setting, that material is available it would just take some research.

For anything I will get to it when I can get to it though, some are much further along than others but regardless it won't be done overnight. And I guess that's it for my soapbox...

...As always thank you for reading, and something will come soon enough fingers crossed.

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!